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Bass Guitar Magazine

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The Return Of STING

92 PAGES OF BASS INSPIRATION!

PETE TREWAVAS MARILLION

PLAYERS SCHOOL REPORT

MARTIN MÉNDEZ OPETH

15 BASS EDUCATION COLUMNISTS!

BRIAN MARSHALL ALTER BRIDGE

WARWICK BASS CAMP REPORT

RICHARD TURNER BLACKBERRY SMOKE

TIM COMMERFORD WAKRAT

Future
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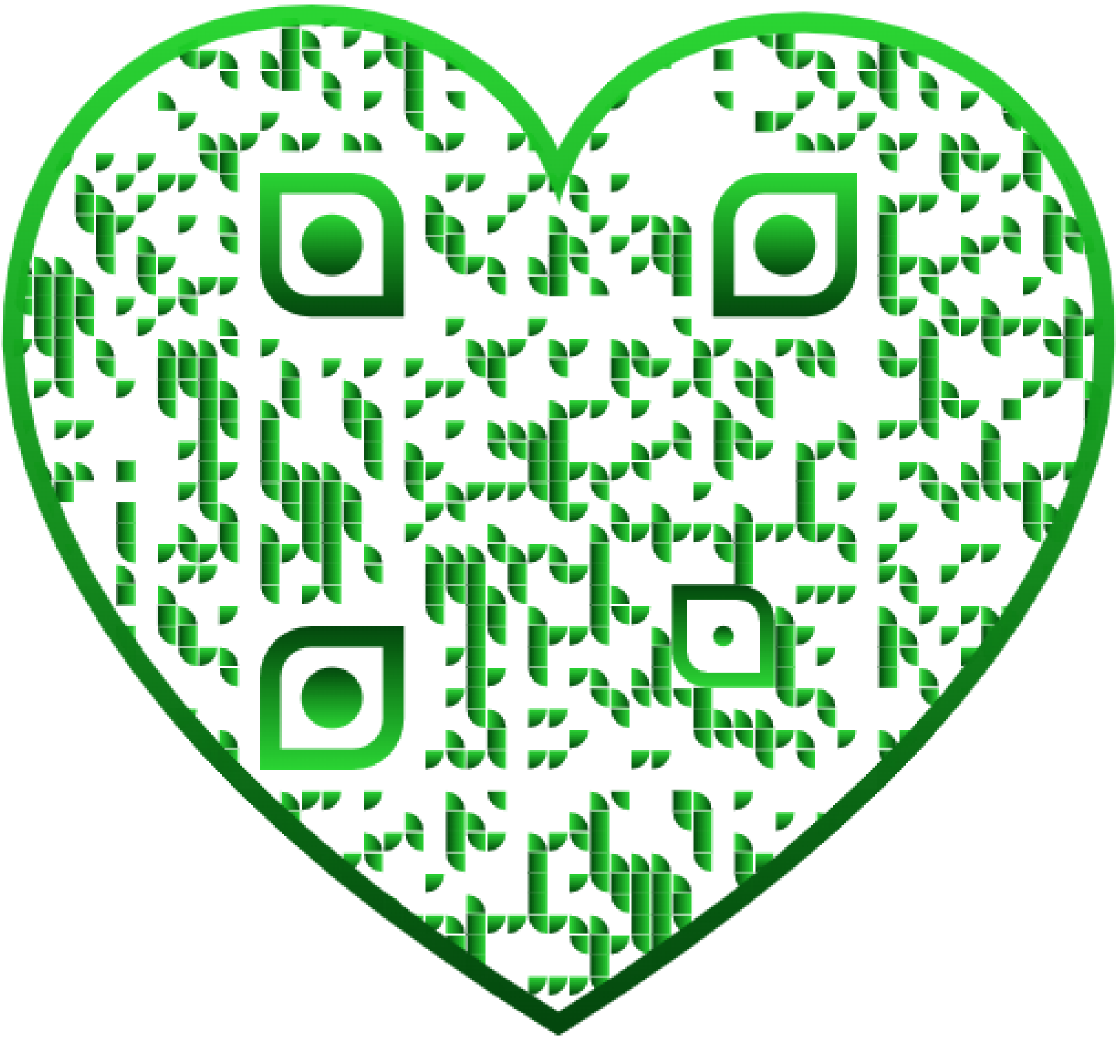

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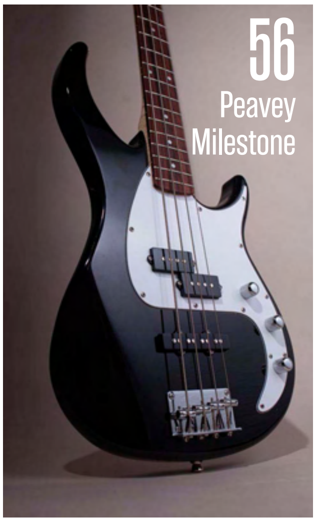
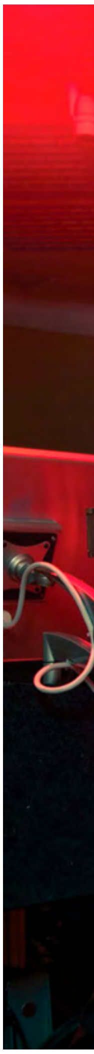
Ten years I've been trying to get Sting on our cover. Ten years! But here we are, with another interviewee ticked off the bass bucket list. Back in rock territory and doing bass interviews again after a decade of diversions into folk and classical territory, the man born Gordon Sumner sits down with us to reveal things we never knew. Jaco used to call him up in the wee hours of the morning. He has no time for five-strings. And he has never recorded a Christmas madrigal... Ladies and gentlemen, prepare to meet a bona fide legend when that word is criminally overused. It was a huge pleasure to meet him. I love this job.

We've brought you more bass content than ever before in this issue, thanks to sit-downs with Brian Marshall of Alter Bridge, Nick Fyffe of The Temperance Movement, Richard Turner of Blackberry Smoke, Tim Commerford of Wakrat, Pete Trewavas of Marillion, Martin Méndez of Opeth and Steve Uccello. That's a whole lot of low end amazingness, and that's before we sent Mike Brooks and Phil Mann to Warwick HQ and the Players School in Florida respectively. Then there's a feast for the eyes in the form of new gear from Music Man, Sigma, Peavey, Genzler and 3 Leaf, plus enough tuition to keep you busy for a month, no matter what your ability. Dive in, and we'll see you next month!

Joel McIver, editor





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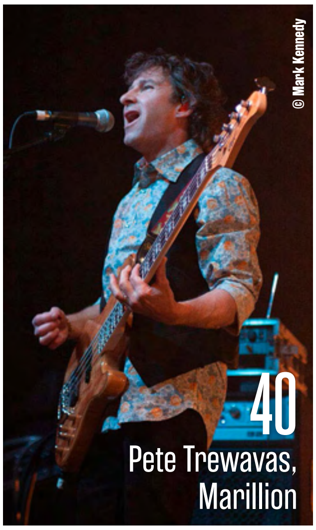

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THE LOW DOWN

News and views from the bass world, collated by BGM's team of intrepid newshounds

© Tina K

CLONE WARS

Electro-Harmonix has released the Bass Clone, a chorus pedal with core circuitry based on the American FX makers' Small Clone chorus, but with added features for bass. The Bass Clone's Crossover switch cuts low end from the modulated signal so the pedal delivers a more accurately articulated bottom end with excellent note definition, it says here. The Treble control affects the whole signal while the Bass control only affects the dry half. Together with the Crossover switch, they provide precise sound shaping that lets the player achieve a tight, focused bass sound. The US RRP is $90.40: we have one right here, so watch out for our review.

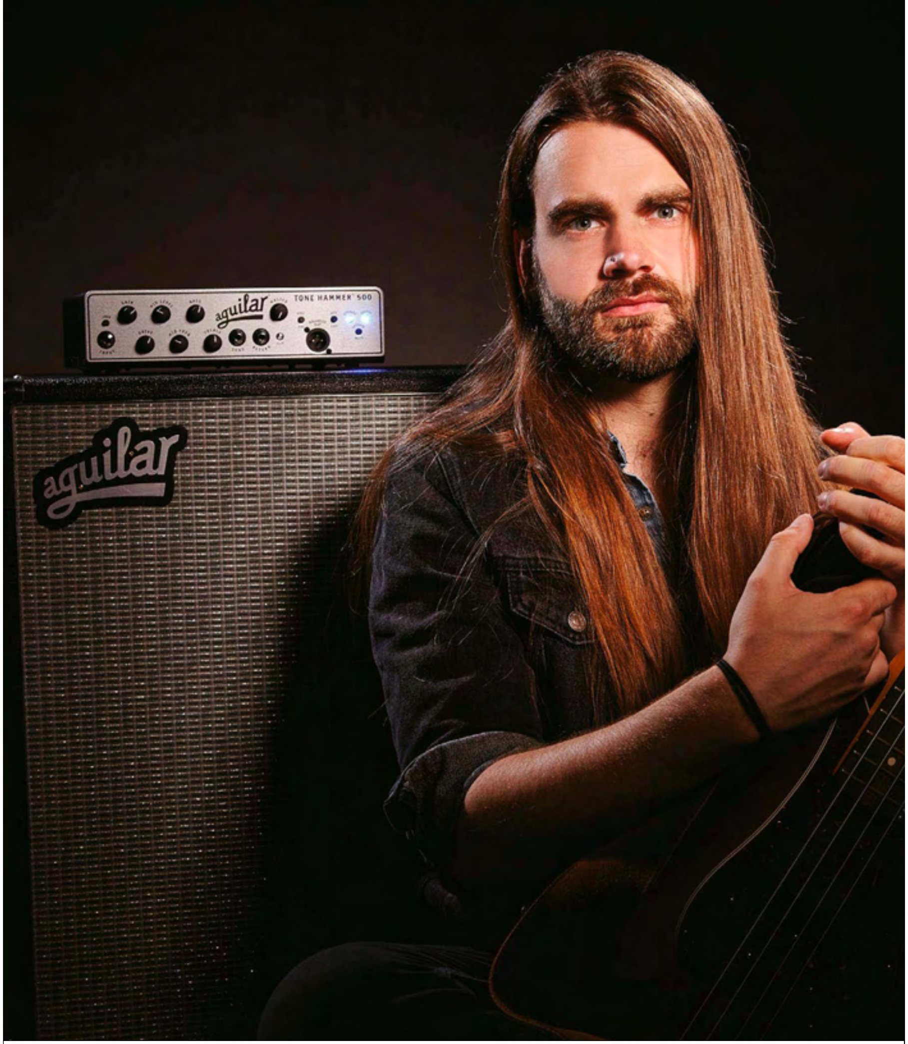
www.ehx.com/products/bass-clone

CELEBRATING JACK

Jack Bruce's son Malcolm Bruce has announced a live concert on October 25, the second anniversary of Jack's death, to be held at London's Shepherds Bush Empire in celebration of his father's life and music. The first artists to be announced as this issue went to press were Ginger Baker (Cream), Billy Cobham (Miles Davis, Mahavishnu Orchestra), Steve Hackett (Genesis), Eddi Reader (Fairground Attraction), Bernie Marsden (Whitesnake), Dennis Chambers, Jeff Berlin, Corky Laing, Clem Clempson, Gary 'Mudbone' Cooper, Chris Spedding, Maya Sage, Iain 'Nico' Bruce and Kofi Baker, with musical direction by Pete Brown and Malcolm Bruce.

"This show will be a chronological musical journey through my dad's musical career," says Malcolm. "We'll be starting from the early years with the Alexis Korner and Graham Bond era, moving through the Cream era, to his many solo records with a nod to some of the other important collaborations during his lifetime."

Tickets are priced at £40, £60 and £100 (VIP, including meet and greet) at www.ticketweb.co.uk or 0844 477 2000. Proceeds raised from the evening will be donated to Nordoff Robbins and Jack's favourite local charity, East Anglian Children's Hospices (EACH).



BEAR HUNT

Aguilar Amplification and DR Strings have added Chris Clark of Hunter & The Bear to their UK artist rosters. Chris plays an Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 bass head and DB 410 cabinet and says, "Aguilar provides the pure power, tone and reliability I need, while accurately representing me as a player. I am hearing parts of my playing I have never truly heard from a bass amp before. It's amazing, Aguilar is making me a better player." He adds, "DR Bass strings have all the qualities I'm constantly looking for – a brightness of tone and clear note resonance make them my go-to string choice for all my basses." Aguilar Amplification and DR Strings are exclusively distributed by Barnes & Mullins in the UK and Ireland.

www.hunterandthebear.co.uk

CALLING CABS

Peavey PVH bass cabinets are now available in the UK through exclusive distributors Barnes & Mullins. The PVH series has four models, a 2x10, 2x12 and 4x10 with 600W, 900W and 1200W power handling respectively, as well as the 1516 model with a heavy-duty 15" speaker and two 8" mid/high speakers. The 1516 cabinet (900W program power handling) is an updated version of Peavey's original 1516 cab. Pay between £483 and £713 RRP for these desirable boxes.

www.bandm.co.uk

TUBULAR

Darkglass Electronics has announced the Microtubes 900, a 900W bass amplifier equipped with an all-analogue preamp and a Class D power module. On the right side of the control panel is the clean section, with Gain and Master controls and an active 4-band EQ. On the left side you'll see the Microtubes Engine, helping bassists cut through the mix while adding tube break up, harmonics, natural compression, distortion and other effects. The standard mode will deliver 900W RMS at 4 Ohms and 500W at 8.

http://darkglass.com/microtubes-900

JAMMIN'

Jam At The Farm, organised and hosted by Martin Sims Guitar Works, raised over £1000 for the music charity Nordoff-Robbins. Visitors to the free family event in September enjoyed an afternoon of music from some of the South East's premier bands and solo artists, while the music instrument sector was represented by manufacturers and businesses such as Ashdown Engineering, Scott Dixon Cases, East UK, The Music Shop, Right Track Music, Sims LED and Enfield Guitars.

Martin Sims said: "We have been supporting Nordoff-Robbins now for some years and thought this would be an ideal way to raise further funds for such a worthy cause." Sims is hoping to make Jam At The Farm a yearly fixture in the UK's festival calendar, expanding it to include more music-related companies and showcasing younger talent new to playing on a fully rigged stage with an audience.

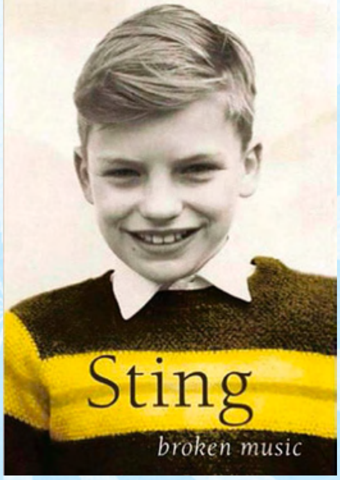
© Fraser Allen Photography

Win

Win a signed copy of Sting's autobiography *Broken Music* (the editor's slightly creased copy of the book and not a brand new one – hey, it has extra character!) by answering this easy-peasy question:

What was Sting's pre-Police band called?
A First Entrance
B Last Exit
C Nearest Escalator

Answers by 29 November to www.bassguitarmagazine.com/competition/.

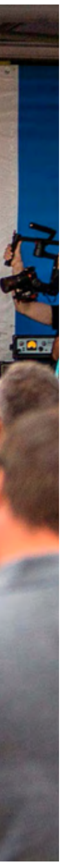


REVOLVER

Every month we tell you the bass-line we can't stop listening to

THIS MONTH: The Beatles, 'Something' (1969)

Bassist: Paul McCartney
The late George Harrison wrote this ace song for *Abbey Road*, his band's penultimate album, and what a beautiful ballad it is. What you'd expect, given that it was recorded close to half a century ago, would be for Paul McCartney to accompany Harrison's lustrous guitar and vocal harmonies with a subtle, barely present bass-line. But no, he whacks a melodic, staccato line full of stops and starts all over the verse, supposedly causing the composer to direct an evil look at him across the studio. The line illustrates Macca's genius with a bass melody to a T, although how he got away with it is still a mystery.



BASSWATCH

Every month, keen bass-spotter Ray Walker brings us an online bargain.

This month: Gretsch G6119B Broadkaster £1,255
http://tinyurl.com/zug7q9y

This month we're looking at a hollow-body beauty. The Gretsch Broadcaster sports a maple body with an arch-laminate-maple top. With its single cutaway, Filtertron pickups and fast, responsive neck, this bass is modelled after the great Gretsch guitars of the 1960s, in particular, the Tennessee Rose. With that full, round, hollow-body tone, this is a bass that really delivers. The three-piece maple laminate neck sports a 30.3" scale and a rosewood fingerboard. For a 25-year-old instrument, this bass is in great condition. I could make space for this one...

TEMPTED BY EVE

Eve Guitars are delighted to announce the newest member of their handcrafted bass range with the Lunna model. "Made to Eve's exacting standards and attention to detail, the Lunna sits at the top of the Eve range and is fully customisable to meet your own preference and playing style," founder Douglas Mullen tells us. "The Lunna bass comes equipped with two vintage-style pickups for a wonderfully rich tone with added growl, courtesy of the wide combination of options at your disposal in an instrument with unbelievable sound, craftsmanship and perfect balance, thanks to the stunning single-cut design," he adds. The Lunna is available as a four-, five- or six-string and a 34" or 35" scale, and comes with a quartersawn sapele bolt-on neck, a wenge fingerboard and a variety of body woods and tops. Left-hand and fretless versions are available at no extra charge and the Lunna is handmade in the UK. Snag one from £2400 to £3200, including domestic P&P.

www.evebass.co.uk

CORT IN THE ACT

South Korean luthiers Cort have released a new acoustic bass, the AB850F. With a jumbo body made up of a spruce top and mahogany back and sides, the bass comes with a 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, a 34" scale and Fishman's Isys + EQ preamp, also found on a Sigma bass reviewed in this issue. Nab one for $449, including gig bag, and watch out for our review.

www.proel.co.uk

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BASSICALLY SPEAKING

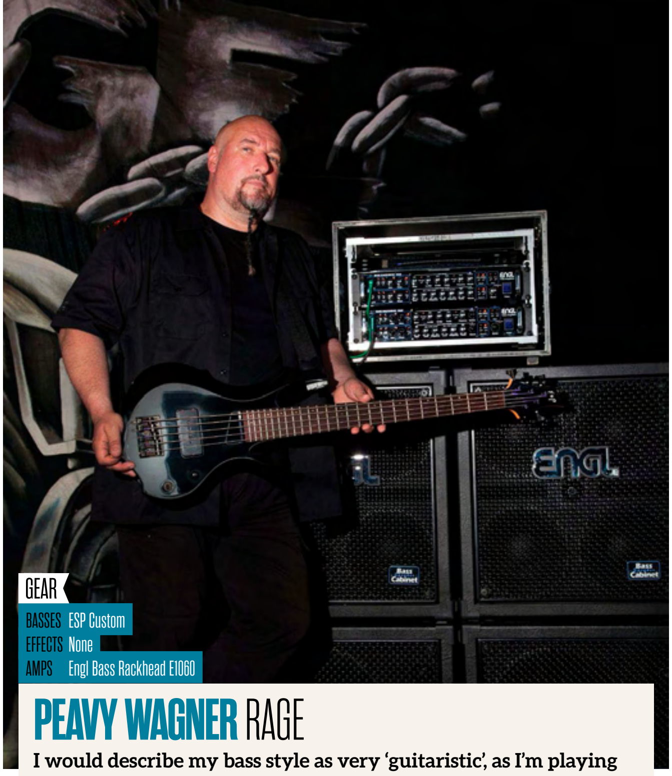
Bassists reveal the tricks of their trade faster than a snapping D string

GEAR
BASSES Nexus JBN Acuslectric MD signature, Fender Jazz
EFFECTS SansAmp RMI, EBS MultiComp, MXR Tube
AMPS Ampeg SVT-3Pro

MARIUSZ DUDA RIVERSIDE

My bass style is the style of someone who would like to play the guitar, but in the band that spot was already taken. Four strings are enough for me to create the melodies and moods I want. The secret of playing bass is modesty (less is more) and to have a good sense for the rhythm. My first bass was a Fender Jazz bass made in Mexico. It is my favourite to date. I consider bass heroes as artists that besides playing bass can also compose a song's music and lyrics. I respect composing skills more than bass technical playing, so for me Paul McCartney and Sting are the best choices. Geddy Lee is a good example too. To upcoming bass players I want to say: don't listen to a bass player or musician trying to say something profound. Follow your instinct and play from the heart. That is the most important thing. We're promoting our new album, *Love, Fear And The Time Machine*. I am very proud of this album.

http://riversideband.pl/en/



GEAR
BASSES ESP Custom
EFFECTS None
AMPS Engl Bass Rackhead E1060

PEAVY WAGNER RAGE

I would describe my bass style as very 'guitaristic', as I'm playing in three-piece line-ups, mainly I'm trying to fill up the gaps when the guitar is playing solo. In general I see my role as adding as much to the song themes as possible. I play five-string bass, because it gives me additional possibilities to round up the band's sound. I just like the extra low-end. I do not slap, because I'm playing metal, in this music this style rarely fits in my opinion. Which doesn't mean I'd never do it for my own enjoyment... The secret of playing bass well is to know as much about music and playing techniques as possible. I learned to play classical guitar before I switched to the bass in my youth. The wider your musical range is, the better you know what to do with an instrument in general, I'd say. My first bass was a Rickenbacker from 1969, I still use it now and then. Recently I've played for a tribute show for Jon Lord, most of the material was old Purple songs, so the Rick was the obvious choice. My favourite bass ever to date is my custom-made ESP. Nori Ishii from the custom shop in Tokyo built it for me in 1996. I need no other. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Mr. Big's *Lean Into It*: Billy Sheehan's tone is awesome! Rage's new album, *The Devil Strikes Again*, is out now.

www.rage-official.com

GEAR
BASSES Breedlove BJ350/SME4
EFFECTS None
AMPS None

GEAR
BASSES Fender Jaguar, Ibanez Artcore
EFFECTS None
AMPS Various

ELIZA NIEMI MAUNO

My bass style is melodic and understated. I like to hold it down and lay a solid foundation while also working in counterpoint melodies. I grew up playing classical cello, so my style reflects that: I always fingerpick and use vibrato, and never slap. The secret of playing bass well is being able to sit back into the groove, and to always keep it simple and nail it instead of getting too fancy and spilling the milk! My first bass ever was a black Godin A4 fretless semi-acoustic, which sounded and played a lot like a cello. I loved that thing and played it for four years, but it was pretty one-dimensional. My favourite bass ever to date is a NYC Sadowsky P/J Bass four-string (always four-string!). My dad had one for a few years and I got to tour with it for a while. It was the smoothest thing I've ever played – real buttery.

My bass heroes are Tina Weymouth, Adam Le Blanc, Carol Kaye, my dad Art Niemi, Bob Babbitt, and Bernard Reed. The greatest bass player that ever lived is Bakithi Kumalo. The perfect bass tone is something between Kumalo's on *Graceland*, and Jamerson's classic dead thud. If the band is a tomato sauce, then the bass is like the garlic. It's a seemingly subtle ingredient, but it's essential. It brings out all the other flavours. It's easy to screw up – you can add it too early and burn it, or too late and not give the flavour enough time to release. But when you get it right, it makes the whole dish. My band Mauno is about to play some shows in the UK and Germany (Tin Angel in the UK is re-releasing our first record Rough Master over there), then we're doing a cross-Canada tour to support the re-release by Idée Fixe over here. We're in the middle of recording our sophomore album.

www.mauno.bandcamp.com

BRIAN WROTEN

I do not play five- or six-string bass, because I just never liked the tighter string-spacing that five- and six-string basses have. I like having a bit of room to dig in. I do not slap, because it doesn't really interest me much personally. Many bass guitar clichés are also slap-related. The secret of playing bass well is practising every day, even if it's just for 10 minutes. My first bass was an ESP LTD five-string. I think it's bad luck to sell your first bass, so I still have it. My favourite bass ever to date is my 1972 Gibson SB450. It's my musical soulmate, I would burn everything else I own before I gave up that bass. My bass heroes are Cliff Burton, James Jamerson, Chris Squire, Brian Ritchie and Geddy Lee. The worst thing you could do to yourself as a musician is to turn yourself off to a style of music simply because you do not like it. You will never grow as a musician until you learn to embrace music in its totality.

www.brianwroten.com

GEAR

BASSES Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay
EFFECTS Boss pedals, Rat Distortion, Axe-FX II
AMPS MESA/Boogie M6 Carbine, Traditional 4x10 cab

DAVE COUPER CALIGULA'S HORSE

I am a fingerpicking rock bassist who slaps a little and taps a little less, at least as much as Caligula's Horse requires of me. My first bass was a Yamaha RBX760A four-string fretted bass in translucent green, with gold hardware. My dad and I bought it from the Bass Centre in Melbourne when I was 16. It hasn't been played as much as it deserves to have been played. My favourite bass to date is my current bass, an Ernie Ball Music Man StingRay five-string. It has a natural finish and a black pickguard. Its tone is simply stunning, and I feel like I'm 10 times better at playing (and especially slapping) already just from the change to this instrument. The secret of playing bass well is in the right hand. As a reasonably talented guitarist first and foremost, I found the left hand transferred very well to bass playing, but taking a pick out of the equation brought me down to earth very quickly.

Exercise your arms and hands. Practise a lot, even if it's in front of the TV while playing a turn-based computer game! Use your third and pinky fingers to help with quick rhythmic parts. After getting serious in 2009, it is only very recently that I have felt like I can call myself a genuine bassist, and I appreciate that I still have much work to do to come anywhere near the level of my heroes and contemporaries. I slap because I used to be bad at it, then heard Dirty Loops and that ridiculous virtuoso bassist of theirs, Henrik Linder, and thought 'I want to be half as good as that guy!'

My bass hero is Paul McCartney – he wrote great melodic bass-lines in the latter half of the Beatles' existence. Chris Squire, Mike Rutherford, John Deacon, Roger Waters, and John Entwistle are the bassists I grew up with, thanks to my parents' great taste. Mike Anthony because he is also a great backing vocalist. Geddy Lee – the greatest bass-playing frontman ever. Tony Levin for the groove and unusual/experimental tones. John Myung for being astonishingly proficient. Martin Mendez for brilliantly carrying the torch of the 1970s legends. Kristoffer Gildenlöw for the modern fretless playing and being an indirect influence on my path to Caligula's Horse. We release our third album, *Bloom*, through Inside Out Music, shortly.

www.caligulashorse.com

GEAR

BASSES Fender 1962 Jazz, Fender Jaguar, Fender Precision, Sei, Warwick Streamer
EFFECTS MXR Envelope Filter, MXR Bass Compressor, MXR Bass Fuzz Deluxe, MXR Phase 90
AMPS Warwick Quad 6, Warwick Tubepath 10.1

STEVE GORDON SKYE & ROSS

The secret of playing bass well is holding the groove solid and being part of the foundation of the song. I play five-string bass occasionally if the gig needs it, but most of the time I find that dropping my E to a D and sticking to one bass does the job. I do not slap, because it should only be slapped when playing disco funk tunes from the 70s. My first bass was a yellow BC Rich bass I bought for £50 – basically the cheapest bass in the shop at the time. My bass heroes are Bernard Edwards, James Jamerson, Scott Firth, Louis Johnson, Pino Palladino, and Robbie Shakespeare. Jimi Hendrix once said that if he practised harder he could have been a bass player! I am currently touring with Skye and Ross from Morcheeba, and also currently writing with Skye for her next solo record.

www.skyeross.co.uk

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GEAR

BASSES Jazz-style bass built by my brother, with EMG JPJ pickups and Kahler tremolo, Fender Jazz 62 reissue with EMG JPJ pickups, Rickenbacker 4003, Wal Mark I fretless, Squier Precision (MIJ) with Seymour Duncan SPB-1 pickup, 1949 Czech double bass
EFFECTS TC Electronic PolyTune, Keeley Compressor, Electro-Harmonix Bass Micro Synthesizer, Digitech Whammy, SansAmp Bass Driver, Morley Cliff Burton Tribute Series Power Fuzz Wah, Boss DD-6 delay, TC Electronic Hall Of Fame reverb
AMPS Ampeg SVT VR, Ampeg 410HLF cab, Aguilar Tonehammer 500, Acoustic Image Ten2

ANDY CHAMPION SMOOVE & TURRELL

In the biog of another band I work with, my playing is described as 'thunderous maximalism'. I quite like that. I also play double bass, and with that instrument it's very much the more energy you put in, the more you get out. I always try to be as melodic as possible though. I play four-string 99 per cent of the time but play five-string when required. I don't do six-strings. I've nothing against them or those who play them, it's just not for me at the moment. I always thought that high C string sounded like the bass had been sucking on helium. I enjoy a good slap sometimes. I felt it became a bit unfashionable a few years ago and I avoided it, but then I remembered I've never been fashionable – so thumbs up. Be aware of how you sound. It's easy to go on autopilot and get into the habit of playing one particular way. Practise fingerstyle, thumb (not just slap), plectrum and so on. Don't just have a good technique, have many good techniques. And whatever you're playing, ask yourself, "Is this the best sound I can produce for this song?" My first bass was an Aria Pro II XRB in red and black crackle finish. I got it when I was 12. My bass hero is Cliff Burton, the reason I took up the bass. Other heroes: Paul McCartney, Charles Mingus, Steve Harris, Paul Chambers, Chris Squire, Burke Shelley, Michael Formanek. Don't always try to play in the pocket. Sometimes there are more interesting things happening outside of it. Smoove & Turrell release their fourth album, *Crown Posada*, on 14 October. We'll then be on tour throughout the UK this autumn. Tour dates are on our website.

www.smooveandturrell.com

GEAR

BASSES Jackson CBXNT
EFFECTS MXR M80 DI+ and M85 Bass Distortion
AMPS Marshall VBA400 and Marshall VBC810

MARKUS SONS OF BALAUR

I don't slap, I punch. This is black metal – for me that means attack is everything and nothing beats a pick. My bass style is bloody, brutal, no mercy. That is what it is to be a Son Of Balaur. The secret of playing bass well is alcohol and seeing the bass as an enemy that must be beaten into submission. Know your sermons, check your targets and attack with full force. There is no game playing in Sons Of Balaur, you hit the mark or you get hit, I would suggest speaking to our ex-guitarist about this but that would prove difficult now – ha ha ha. My favourite bass ever, to date, is my new Jackson CBXNT, it has a crushing low end due to the high mass bridge and superfast neck which I really like. It's well-balanced but most importantly it can take a real beating without breaking or going out of tune, which saves me smashing it over my tech's head. My bass heroes are Jørn 'Necrobutcher' Stubberud, Conrad 'Cronos' Lant and Tom 'King' Visnes. Hard hitters, no surrender. Venom, Gorgoroth and Mayhem are the 'Satan fathers' of black metal, 'Deathcrush' is still one of the greatest riffs ever. The greatest bass player that ever lived was Lemmy – there's no-one harder or faster. If I could get the bass tone of any album ever released, I would choose Slayer's *Reign In Blood*: like a pickaxe to the temple, that album still crushes and Tom Araya's speed is a constant inspiration. Sons Of Balaur are busy with our new album, *Tenebris Deos*, which will be released in October through Seasons Of Mist. In the meantime we're travelling far and wide spreading the Sons Of Balaur gospel, letting the world know how deep into evil and depravity we have journeyed to bring about our Lord Balaur's rebirth, how the soldiers of good have tried and failed to stop this, how no more are you protected from the forces of darkness, and how through violence, blood addiction, sex and black metal, the Realm Of The Damned is the new murderous reality of this world. *(Editor's note: Sons Of Balaur are a friendly, non-violent band assembled to soundtrack the forthcoming Realm Of The Damned horror film.)*

www.realmofthedamned.co.uk

THE LUTHIER

Ace bass-maker Doug Mullen of Eve Guitars addresses the all-important neck join

Last issue we considered the neck and fingerboard and how various wood combinations can open up different sonic frequencies in an instrument. One of the most misunderstood areas of the sound of the bass is actually how the neck is attached to the body itself, as this can utterly change the dynamics of the frequencies. Some perceive that bolt-on necks are 'cheaper' due to the separate physical attachment and because they are more commercially available, and consider that set-necks are a poor substitute for through-neck joins, which historically have been the preserve of high-end instruments.

I would suggest that the difference is much more subtle and subjective to your personal taste. The perceived historical wisdom states that bolt-on necks are 'snappier', set-necks are tonally similar but rounder, and through-necks are warm and thick. These general statements do have their exceptions, but they're not too far from the truth. Every type of neck attachment can be mitigated by the wood combination that suits the player's tonal needs. Since the P-Bass and Jazz are accepted as benchmarks in bass design, it's no surprise that our tastes are dictated by the sound and heritage of these two instruments.

How the neck is attached to the body will alter the sound simply because of the physics involved. One continuous piece of wood (or multiple laminates) through the body means that the sound travels along the entire length of the instrument and is accented by the body wings, which themselves alter the colour of the sound. A set-neck is very similar in most respects as the neck is glued into the body, and the wings can be attached by a central core, or set into a pre-routed body cavity. A bolt-on neck is a different construction method, so there is an actual point where the sound changes due to the physical properties of the attachment and can be perceived as sounding more 'immediate'.

Which is better? How long is a piece of string? Again, it all comes down to personal preference and what you really want from an instrument. The simplest is the bolt-on design, which is a misnomer as it's actually screwed on. This design is praised for its versatility and snappy response. The second is the set-neck, which is a fancy term for a glued-in neck. Some people regard a set-neck as less strong than the other two types. This isn't the case at all. In practice, the wood is more liable to break before the glue does. All classical instruments are set-necks, and they seem to cope quite well. This style serves a balance between the bolt-on and through-neck designs. Lastly, the through-neck is simply one continuous section where the body wings are glued onto either side and shaped. The set-neck and through-neck designs have one advantage over bolt-on design in that the 'heel' can almost disappear as the contours are carved with the join. In the end, the choice is really up to you. There is no best option in real terms: it's all about the expectation of what you prefer your frequencies to sound like. Choose wisely and you'll have years of happy bass playing.

info@evebass.com

rockschool

Applied Improvisation with Rockschool

Common jazz chord progressions explored with Rockschool's Joe Hubbard

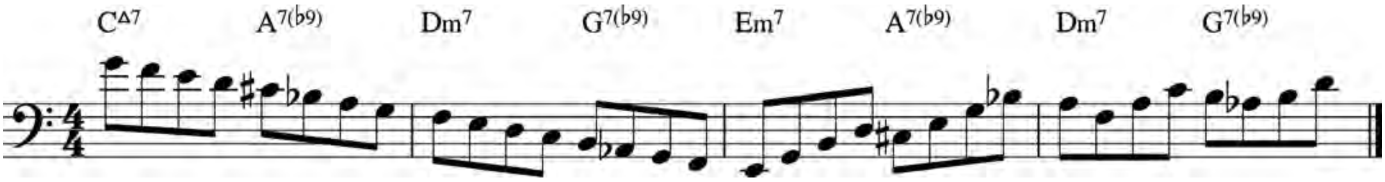
Welcome back! One of the most common chord progressions in jazz is related to the standard Imaj7 VI-7 II-7 V7 progression derived from the diatonic harmonisation of the major scale. Looking at this in C major we would have Cmaj7 A-7 D-7 G7. However, this progression is mostly seen in jazz tunes as Imaj7 V7b9/II-7 II-7 V7b9, or in C major that would be: Cmaj7 A7(b9) D-7 G7(b9). Re-harmonising the VI-7 (A-7) to a secondary dominant chord (A7b9), leading to the II-7 (D-7) chord, creates more harmonic tension within the progression, lending itself to a modern jazz sound.

Because of the addition of the A7(b9) and the alteration of the G7 to a G7(b9), this creates a non-diatonic environment for you to play over when those chords arise. Many people will attempt to play over this progression by using a major scale, but will end up missing the devil in the details over the A7(b9) and the G7(b9). By understanding how to outline these chords, you will create more definitive harmonic clarity when playing over this progression.

Notice how the harmonic rhythm for each chord is two beats in duration. Examples of this progression can be heard on copious jazz standards, including 'Have You Met Miss Jones'. My first example outlines how you could play over this progression as a soloist. It's important to pay close attention to the lines played over the dominant 7th chords. Notice how they are using notes outside of the C major scale. In the third bar notice how this progression repeats, but this time using the III-7 (E-7) as a substitute for the Imaj7 (Cmaj7). For an in-depth understanding on how these harmonic substitutions really work, check out my book, *Functional Harmonic Concepts*, at www.joehubbardbass.com.

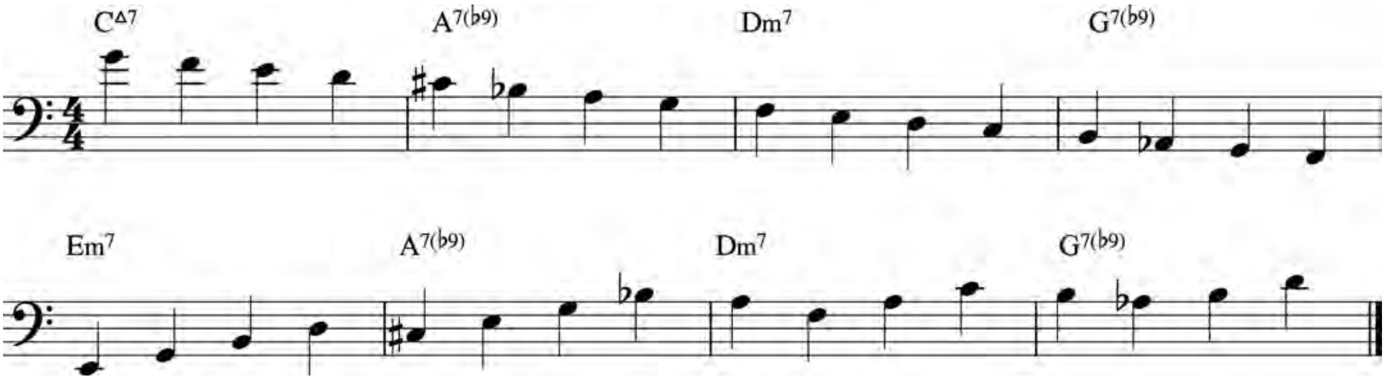
> "IT'S IMPORTANT TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE LINES PLAYED OVER THE DOMINANT 7TH CHORDS. NOTICE HOW THEY ARE USING NOTES OUTSIDE OF THE C MAJOR SCALE"

EXAMPLE 1

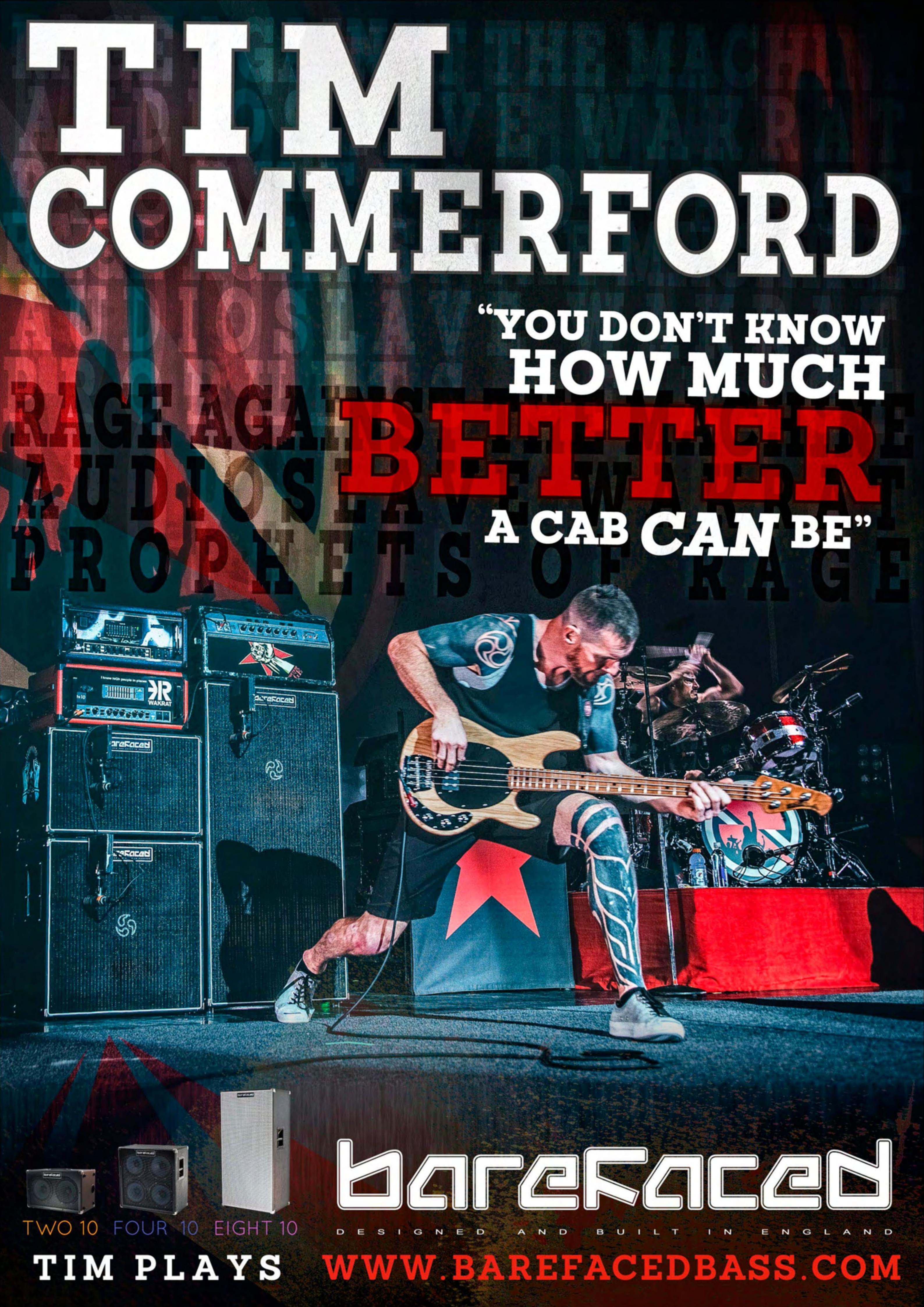


You will often see this progression using the harmonic rhythm of one chord per bar. The next exercise demonstrates how you could use the very same lines as a walking bass-line over this progression.

EXAMPLE 2



It's really important to understand that what you play while blowing a solo over a set of changes doesn't necessarily change when playing a bass-line. Many people are led to believe the complete opposite and end up compartmentalising their roles as a soloist and a bass player. As far as the musical content is concerned, you really don't have to think differently between those two basic functionalities.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THE MU

The role of agents analysed by the MU

In the music industry, an agent is generally someone who secures live work (gigs, support slots and festival appearances and so on) for musicians. Although agencies are commonly known as agents, they may operate in one of two ways – as an employment agency or an employment business. In each case, you need to know what to keep an eye out for, so that you can protect your rights and secure the best live opportunities for your act.

If your agent is acting as an employment agency, they will arrange gig contracts between the hirer – e.g. the venue owner or promoter – and the musicians, and charge a commission on the gig fee under a separate agency contract with the musician or hirer.

The agent cannot be agent for both the musician and the hirer and should make it clear who he/she is actually the agent for. If acting as an employment agent, the agent's terms must include:

- Details of the services to be provided.
- Whether the agent is entitled to sign contracts on your behalf.
- Whether the agent is entitled to receive money on your behalf.
- Details of the fee payable and how it is calculated – this may be a guaranteed amount, a minimum fee, or a deal based wholly or partially on ticket sales/box office revenue.
- Whether a deposit is payable.
- Whether refunds are payable and, if so, how and when this would take place.
- Whether the fee is to be deducted from earnings and, if so, how and when.
- Whether you are required to give, or entitled to receive, notice to terminate the agreement and, if so, how much.

An agent acting as an employment business will 'buy' the musicians for a fee under one contract, and then 'sell' them on to a hirer for a higher fee under another separate contract. The difference between the buying and selling price will be the agent's profit. If acting as an employment business, the agent's terms must include:

- Whether you will be employed or self-employed and the terms and conditions that will apply.
- An undertaking to pay you, whether or not the hirer pays them.
- The length of notice of termination you must give and are entitled to receive.
- The performance fee, which may be a guaranteed amount, a minimum fee or a deal based wholly or partially on ticket sales/box office revenue.
- When remuneration will be paid.
- Any entitlement to holidays or holiday pay.

Is your agency contract exclusive? It's common to have more than one agent. However, some agents will demand to be your sole representative for live work, at home and abroad.

Does your contract require you to pay agency commission for repeat or follow-up bookings? It's worth checking the small print of a contract to see if the agent will demand commission on your future gigs at the same venue or others booked through the same promoter, even if these are arranged directly between you and the hirer or by some other agent.

Musicians' Union members can get contracts checked by our Contract Advisory Service – a specialist solicitor will take a look to see if it's a fair deal or not. If it's not, we can advise you on how to make it fairer and support you with advice on how to negotiate the deal. Anyone can set themselves up as an agent, so it's important you know what to look out for and choose wisely.

If you're looking for an agent and want to know more, or have questions about any other aspect of your career, get in touch via **theMU.org.**

BASSCHAT

'Do looks matter in a bass?' asks Silvia Bluejay of Basschat

Gear Acquisition Syndrome comes initially from seeing a bass and lusting after it, before even touching it to hear its sound and check its playability. Our community periodically wonders how much looks matter in a bass, not just when we buy the instrument, but also – and possibly more importantly – for deciding whether to play the instrument on stage with our band. After all, unless we only play bass along to our favourite records in our bedroom, the instrument is part of what we wear and on a par with the rest of our stage attire, and will be subject to some degree of scrutiny both by our bandmates and by the audience.

For some highly image-conscious Basschatters, and their current or prospective bandmates, looks are the number one priority in a bass and a potential deal-breaker: on one recent thread on the subject, a poster discovered that it's a bad idea to turn up at an audition for a jazz band with a 'pointy' (as opposed to a round-bodied) bass. He will have better luck joining his next hard rock band. Admittedly, you won't get far with a Beatles tribute band if you refuse to play a Höfner violin bass; if you join a cover band who specialise in a particular decade, you'd better wear the right clothes and play the right instruments and amplification. To others, looks (as in the condition the bass is in) don't matter at all; if a road-worn, mojo-rich second-hand bass sounds and feels good, they'll have it.

But what about shape and colour? Most of us are firmly of the opinion that the perfect bass must not just sound and feel good, but also Look Good. There's the rub, though – try to define Look Good and you'll have as many descriptions as there are Basschatters, or an even higher number, considering that an individual's taste can change with time.

Headstocks must be small for the bass to Look Good, except when it somehow still Looks Good with a large one, as in the case of a Precision. However, to a sizeable minority of posters, a Precision is aesthetically offensive, so we're collectively back to square one. Also, many agree that a headless bass is usually ugly, except, of course, in those cases where it Looks Good. Opinions are equally split on colour-matched headstocks: they're either boring or classy. 'Pointy' basses are really naff, apparently, except for those that Look Good, and are therefore Good For Metal. Single cut is hideous, except when... you get my drift. A number of Basschatters are unable to get along with fretless, not necessarily because they have trouble playing one in tune – it's the look of that bald fingerboard.

There is no agreement on colours, with the traditional among us loving the classic sunburst with tort pickguard, and the modernists being absolutely sick to death of that combination and favouring bold, block colours instead. According to some tongue-in-cheek, quasi-scientific Basschat finding, green basses don't Look Good but do sound utterly majestic. Natural wood with no pickguard is the bees' knees to some, and just a weirdly-shaped coffee table to others.

As always, there is no final answer; however, it's important to ask the question so we know what we like. Once we have in our hands a bass we are totally comfortable with, the resulting warm, fuzzy feeling makes us better players!

www.basschat.co.uk

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STING
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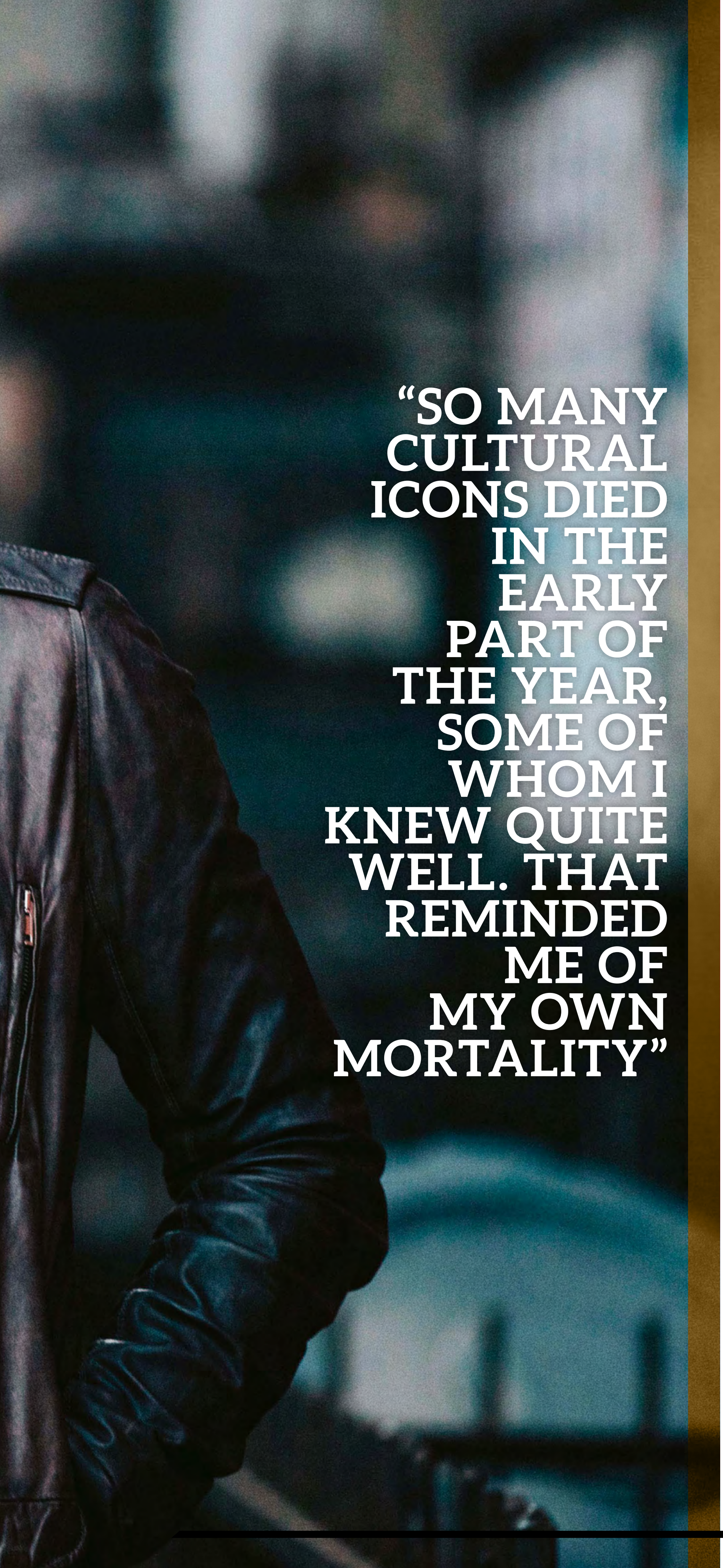


"SO MANY CULTURAL ICONS DIED IN THE EARLY PART OF THE YEAR, SOME OF WHOM I KNEW QUITE WELL. THAT REMINDED ME OF MY OWN MORTALITY"

Songwriter, actor, author, activist, rock star, jazz freak... Gordon 'Sting' Sumner is quite the renaissance man. Oh, and he plays bass. Joel McIver meets the legend

Every issue of this magazine has a pretty amazing bass player as its cover star, but there are regular stars – and then there are extra-special stars. Sting is one of the latter. You may know him as the guy who fronts the Police, or the solo artist who sold a gazillion copies of songs like 'Fields Of Gold', 'Russians', 'Englishman in New York' and all the other tunes that are now in your head because you just read their titles. Or you may recognise him for acting in *Quadrophenia*, *Dune*, *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels* and what have you. Your kids know him as the funny levitating guy from *Bee Movie*. Everyone knows Sting for something.

In bass world, though, we know the guy as Gordon Sumner, the ex-teacher born in 1951 who played in jazz and fusion bands before forming the Police in 1977, playing whopping great bass parts and being a massive rock star. Fretted, fretless, double bass, eight-string – the man was unstoppable on bass, filling up the empty spaces within the trio format of the Police with a variety of lines, from the simple to the finger-threateningly complex.

I've been trying to get an interview with Sting for *BGM* for over a decade, always meeting with resistance – not because he or his handlers are unforthcoming, but because he's been occupying diverse musical territory in that time and bass guitar hasn't been at the top of his list of priorities. After the Police split in 1984, he dominated the 1980s and 90s with a sequence of rock and jazz albums that we all know, beginning with *The Dream Of The Blue Turtles* in 1985 and finishing up with *Brand New Day* in '99. After that he moved in different, less popular directions, doing the R&B-influenced *Sacred Love* in 2003, plus classical and folk releases after that.

Fortunately, Sting's new album, *57th & 9th*, is a return to rockist form. Alongside guitarist Dominic Miller and sometime Frank Zappa drummer Vinnie Colaiuta, he makes a formidable case, as you'll hear if you've tracked down the first single, 'I Can't Stop Thinking About You'. Hence our interview, conducted in a posh London hotel a few weeks before you read this.

Sting and I sit at a table, quaffing tea and talking bass and other essential life-related

topics, for half an hour or so. He's tall, lean and showing his 64 years, wearing a pair of thick specs and asking me to repeat quite a lot of my questions even though I'm sitting two feet away from him (you can make a 'Don't Stand So Close To Me' quip here if you like). But the bloke is full of energy: keen to make his point, eager to stress that he's still progressing as a musician, and impatient with any journalistic inaccuracies I might come up with. For example, when I refer to the 'Christmas madrigals' he recorded for 2006's *Songs From The Labyrinth*, he sharply corrects me, pointing out that these were sixteenth-century art songs rather than madrigals.

This is good. Sting still has plenty of, well, sting. Let's have it, Gordon...

Your new album is great. Does inspiration for songwriting come as easily as it ever did?
No. Ha ha! The music comes pretty easily, because I have a good relationship with my musicians. We have a three-way ping-pong game: we know how to react to each other's ideas, and I can pretty quickly carve that into a song form. The inspiration for lyrics is difficult. I'm 64 and I'm pretty comfortable. I'm not terribly angry about many things, so how do you find inspiration? The first song on this record is about exactly that. You look at a blank page every day and it looks like snow. But what's underneath it? So you're searching for a pathway, a road, a muse, a character, a story... That's difficult, but then, once I start, what's going on in the world – whether I want to write about it or not – unconsciously feeds into the writing process. So there's songs about climate change here, songs about the refugee crisis... I haven't got a song about Brexit. Ha ha! It's too complicated.

'The Ballad Of Boris'?
Oh... I would not write that one. But there have been deaths of so many cultural icons in the early part of the year, some of whom I knew quite well. That reminded me of my own mortality. I wrote this song, '50,000', which is really about that concept, you know, of people being godlike and almost immortal in a way for most of us. So when they die, it freaks you out. As well as the loss for the culture, you think 'Fuck! I'm mortal too'. And when you're a man who's lived most of his life already, you learn philosophy that way.

Your tech, Danny Quatrochi, sent us the details of your bass rig in preparation for this interview.
That's good, because I never really look behind me. I'm kind of busy up front, so I trust Danny to get me the right equipment and the right strings, but one thing I'm particular about is my bass, which I've had for a quarter of a century. It's from 1957, which is almost as old as me, and it's a P-Bass, and it's really been carved by use. It's very, very battered looking but it has a growl that a modern bass guitar simply does not possess. It has a roundwound pickup. I imagine Leo Fender himself put it on a lathe to make it, and it's got a genuine spirit. When you play an instrument, the more you play it, the more responsive it is. It's almost spiritual, if you can say that about an inanimate piece of wood. For me it's not inanimate: it's got a character.

Is it still in good shape after all these years on the road?
Fuck yes.

What's your backup bass when you tour?
I've got a '54 P-Bass which I don't use as often, and so is less responsive, but it's still a beautiful bass. I don't have that many instruments.

You've been through a lot of basses over the years, though.
Yeah. I started with a Fender Jazz, which I still have. I bought it in Newcastle for about 150 quid. It was a lot of money back then. I don't know what it's worth now. Then there was Ibanez, Hamer... what was the one with no headstock?

Steinberger?
Steinberger... but I found my true love eventually. My job as a bass player and a bandleader is an interesting one. Because I control the harmony: it's only a C chord if I play a C. And also I control the top line, the vocals, so the band operates within my bandwidth. So I can control the band very subtly, ha ha! Or maybe not so subtly. They don't seem to bristle under my leadership.

How do you define yourself first and foremost? As a singer-songwriter, bass player, businessman...?
A *businessman*? Um, my passport says 'musician', which I'm very proud of. I think it's a noble profession. To make a living without harming anybody, really, or exploiting anybody. I'm proud of my profession.

Are you equally happy playing guitar and bass?
Yeah, I'm happy on both. I mean, I started as a guitar player and continued to play guitar, mainly acoustic guitar, but the bass seemed to offer a kind of quiet heroism. And also, playing and singing at the same time is something that's not natural: to play a contrapuntal bass-line against the singing is much different to strumming along four in the bar, you know. So learning how to do that was important, because my mentors were Paul McCartney and Jack Bruce and Phil Lynott, who could do it. And I enjoy it. Anything I couldn't play and sing, I knew I could if I slowed everything down. My technique was to slow down gradually and then find the gaps, and then speed it up.

The obvious example of a tricky bass part is 'Spirits In The Material World'.
A lot of very sophisticated musicians have no idea where one is in that song! Ha ha! Which makes me very happy. Where the fuck is one? It doesn't matter.

I've been listening to a few songs by your pre-Police fusion band, Last Exit.
Really? How did you find Last Exit?

On Youtube, they're all there.
Really? That terrifies me.

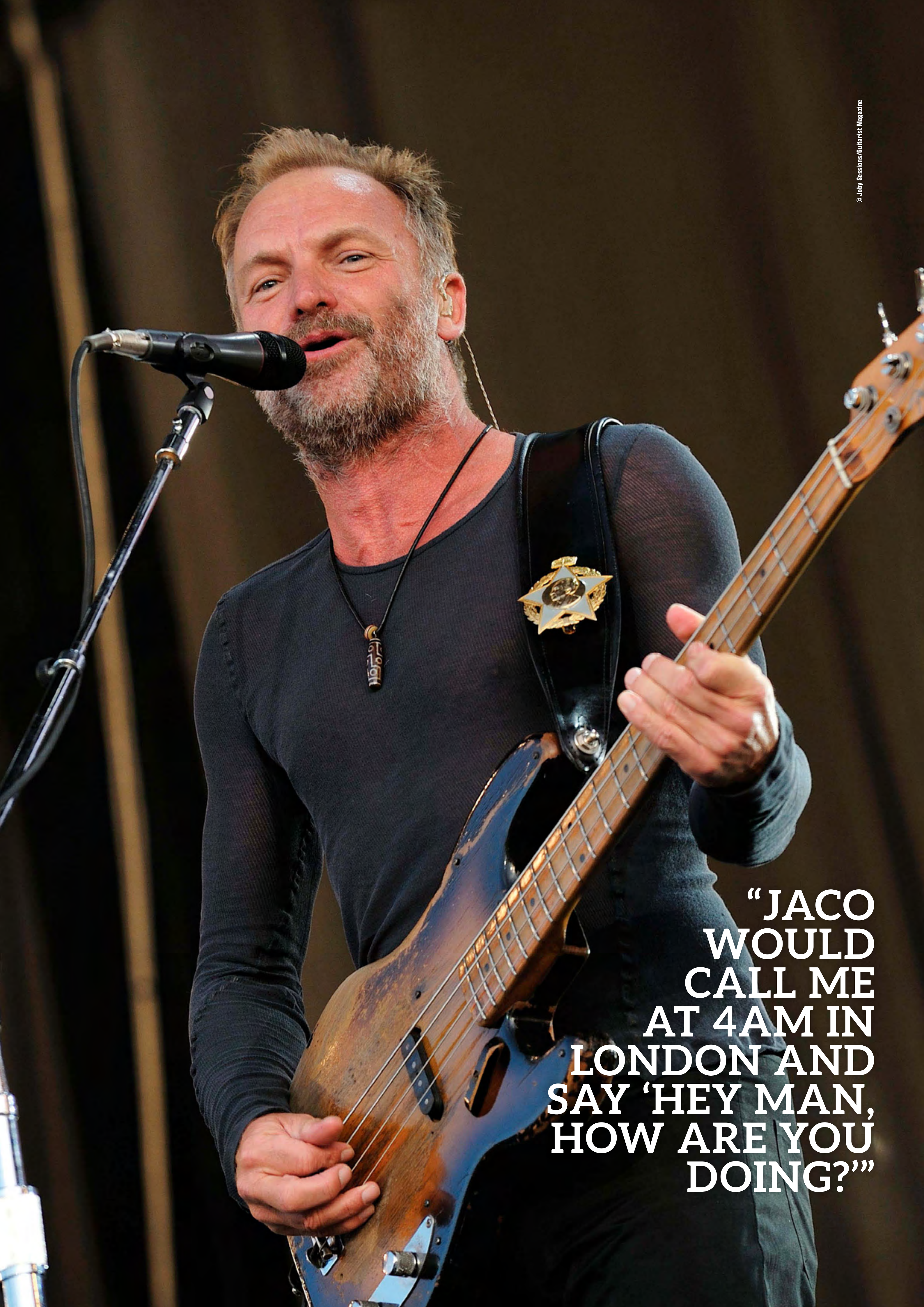
You had chops from an early age, didn't you?
Take the surprise out of your voice! Yeah, I was playing with jazz musicians, and I was playing Stanley Clarke lines from Return To Forever songs. When Jaco came, about that time, he totally recalibrated what it was to be a bass player. He could play Charlie Parker chromatic lines on the bass guitar: nobody had thought of that before.

Did you sit down and figure Jaco's stuff out?
Yeah. In fact I have these exercises I do every so often. I'll find a part and learn it. A couple of months ago I got 'Teen Town', which is an amazing piece of bass playing. It really is. So I'm playing that at the moment. In soundchecks I'll just sit and play 'Teen Town', because it's fun. I knew Jaco. He used to come and see the Police when we played in Miami.

What kind of guy was Jaco?
A beautiful man. Really, a beautiful cat. A little crazy. He would call me at four in the morning in London and say 'Hey man, how are you doing?' and I'd say 'Jaco, it's four in the morning!' and he'd say 'No, it's only like 11pm' and I'd say, 'You're in Miami!' Ha ha! His death was appalling. Unnecessary. I'd love to know what he'd be doing now, if he survived his problems. It would have been remarkable. He was a drummer too, and he played piano. I miss him.

Gear Box

Sting's live gear, detailed by his tech Danny Quatrochi
"The bass is a 1957 Precision. The pickup is from the Seymour Duncan custom shop. It's a single coil, P-Bass stacked pickup model Rev1. The strings are DR Low Rider nickel 40, 60, 80, 100. The wireless units are Sennheiser EW500 G Series. The bass goes from the wireless receiver to a Pete Cornish switching rack and then is routed to an Avalon VT837 preamp which is sent to a Lab Gruppen PLM20000Q power amp. The speakers are from Clair Brothers Audio. There are two ML 18s with a single 18" speaker in each box and two 12 AM speaker cabinets on top. There is a 12" speaker and a 2" high-frequency horn in each cabinet."



"JACO WOULD CALL ME AT 4AM IN LONDON AND SAY 'HEY MAN, HOW ARE YOU DOING?'"

© Joby Sessions/Guitarist Magazine

©Kevin Mazur/Wire Image

"BUSKING WAS HUGELY IMPORTANT FOR ME. I'D HEAR SOMETHING FOR THE FIRST TIME AND THEN BE ABLE TO PLAY IT"

Do you ever play slap bass?
Not really. I've developed it over the years, just naturally. I play with my thumb and two fingers, like an apoyando style, so these fingers are kinda hidden. Most of the work is done with the thumb and that goes up and down the neck, so you get that effect. I'm also pulling a lot. But I was with Tony Levin in the summer and he said 'I've never noticed how you play, it's odd!' I said 'You should try it' and he did! The great Tony... I could see him practising using two fingers and a thumb.

You play both fingerstyle and with a pick.
I don't think there can be any rules about how you play an instrument. I think innovation is important. A pick was good because we were only a trio, and I needed the bass-line to be very clear, rather than rumbling and vague, so playing with a pick low down near the bridge helped the Police, I think, and often on record I would double the same part on guitar as well, so it was very clear what we were doing. But I also like rumbly bass players, you know: I love Hendrix's bassists, that kind of atmospheric thunder that they created.

You have a signature Fender Precision. Do you play them much?
I have a few. My daughter plays one. It's identical to the one that I use, apart from the gouges! It's a beautiful bass. I think it was Fender's bestseller for a long time. I usually give them away as a gift or an auction item. I think they're lovely.

Do you play five-string?
No! It confuses the hell out of me. If I need a low D I'll tune it down. I don't want another string there. Having played the lute for a while, with 26 strings, I don't want the same issue when I'm trying to sing and lead a band. Four is enough. I don't feel the need to be flash. I play the roots, and occasionally I'll drop a third in instead of the root, but my job is to just lay a foundation. I think the band appreciate that. I don't get in the way with my frequency. And working with Vinnie Colaiuta, shit! What do I need to do? Not much.

Would you say you're a good bass player?
You know, I could hold a job down. I worked in an orchestra pit in a theatre. I backed cabaret, I backed comedians and strippers. I worked on a cruise ship. I played old-time dance music, I played Dixieland jazz, I played in a big band. Yeah, I'm a fucking good bass player, ha ha! I had a wider musical education experience than most rock stars, who just play AC/DC riffs or Led Zeppelin. I'm glad of that. I think that feeds into my process. I'm proud of all that work I did.

Which bass players did you admire when you were starting out?
One of the first bands I ever saw was Cream. I also saw the Jimi Hendrix Experience when I was 14, but then I saw Cream, and they kind of turned my head around, ha ha! It was a very formative experience to see those two bands. And then I was in the Police, so the trio thing was prevalent.

Do today's kids have an equivalent band like Cream to look up to?
Don't ask me, I don't know. Ask kids... I was watching these amazing trios, and then on a Saturday night I'd go and play with guys who were literally in their eighties, playing piano, drums and old-time dance music, and you'd play standards for an hour non-stop. And the only clue you got about what key would be next was a gesture with the fingers for the accidentals. They'd do that a bar before the key change, and you'd go to a fourth below and find your key and think 'I recognise this...' So busking was hugely important for me. I'd hear something for the first time and then be able to play it.

Do you have a long-term plan?
Yeah. I want to get old as a musician and keep making my living as a musician, and be better. I can do rock music. I know how it works, but I'm also interested in the upper partials of a chord and the way harmony works. You can do both. It's limitless. People say 'It has to be rock'n'roll' or 'It has to be this genre' but that kills music. Genre does not help music. It's labelling.

Do you ever get sick of touring?
I've toured all my life. People say 'How long's the tour?' and I say, 'I started in 1974', ha ha! What else am I gonna do? I'm used to it. You know, it's pretty comfortable out there, in the best hotels, and the best mode of travel. You walk out in front of thousands of people and they're all pleased to see you, and nobody asks for their money back. It's fucking great!

***57th & 9th* is out on 11 November on Polydor.**
Info: www.sting.com.

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Happy Camp

Mike Brooks went to the Warwick Bass Camp for the bass education experience of the year

This year's Warwick Bass Camp, held at the company's HQ in Markneukirchen, Germany, was the fifth such event since 2012: in the Kingdom of Bass, it has garnered an enviable reputation, with attendees coming from all over the globe to take part in the workshops, classes, and performances and to mingle with some of the greatest bassists on the planet. Aside from the London Bass Guitar Show or the NAMM events, where else might you be able to spend an evening chatting to the likes of Alphonso Johnson, Felix Pastorius, Neil Murray, Stu Hamm and Yolanda Charles before being invited up on stage to hold down the low end for Stevie Salas and Bon Jovi guitarist Phil X?

For a one-off fee (cheaper the earlier you book), you are afforded a week's hotel stay plus transfers to and from the airport, with refreshments taken care of at the Warwick location. Aside from sleeping, you won't see much of the hotel, as classes begin at 9am every day and finish around 5.30pm, after which you'll need some relaxation time to take in everything you have witnessed. Dinner is served around 7pm, followed by various jams, performances, conversation and unwinding time.

And with so much knowledge, musical insight and experience to tap into, you will truly want to make the most of your week. The lecturers, technicians, clinicians – or 'professors' as they are labelled – have so much to offer. Over the several days *BGM* attended the camp, it was evident that there was no 'them' and 'us' mentality: everyone is on an equal level to converse and learn from each other. But then the bass community is so often this way inclined – being the bassist in a band requires a specific mindset and at gatherings such as this, it really does reinforce the impression that we are a friendly, welcoming bunch.

On our travels, we bumped into *BGM* regular and Jools Holland's stalwart bassist Dave Swift, who was attending the event for the first time. "I had absolutely no idea what to expect," he says. "I've been invited to attend the camp and the Reeveland Music Festival as a VIP guest, and will be conducting several media interviews and a meet-and-greet session. I've been told to have a great time!"

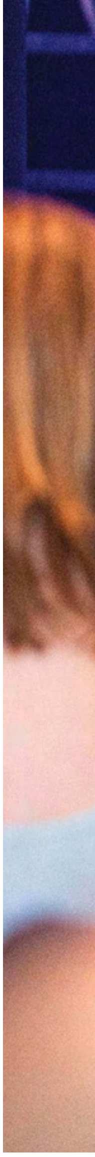
One of the joys of such an event as this is catching up with old friends and making many

pers

new ones – a point not lost on the jovial Mr Swift. "I've already met [former Jamiroquai bassist] Stuart Zender," he says. "We hadn't met before, but we made up for lost time! Warwick's headquarters are very impressive – there's so much to see that I actually felt quite overwhelmed. One minute I'm checking out basses on display, the next I'm chatting with Anthony Wellington and Jonas Hellborg."

The Reeveland Music Festival that he's referring to occurs at the end of the week, featuring a host of bands performing on the live stage. The festival is open to the public and has grown from being a 'Warwick Open Day' to a fully-fledged musical event. The meet-and-greet is an all day event in itself, with a wide range of artists available throughout the day, including Guy Pratt, Bukithi Kumalo and Tool's Justin Chancellor.

Back to the educational side of the Bass Camp. For this year's schedule, the classes ran



for 90 minutes with nine to 10 classes either side of lunch on a typical day, taught by around 13 professors. Different classes were aimed at all skill levels, from beginners to intermediate players, right through to those of a professional standard, in addition to jam classes, master classes and performance classes. Sitting in on several workshops, the facilities were impressive and inspired an academic approach.

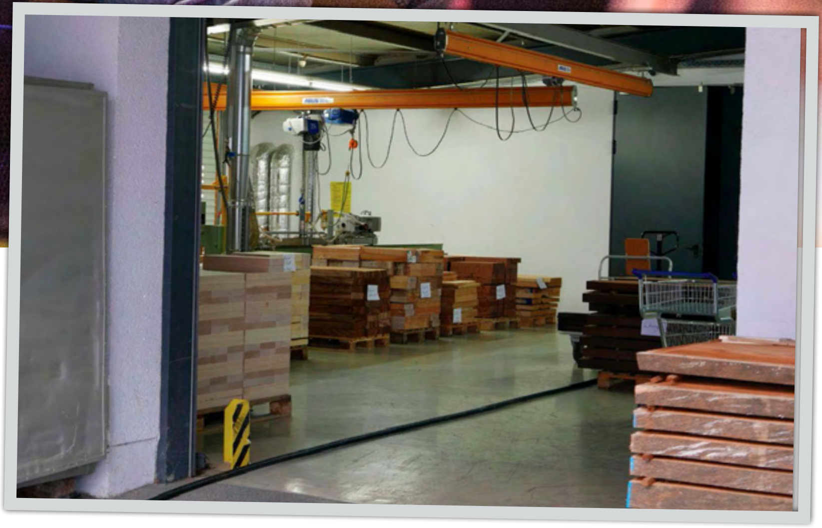
After several days of learning, it must have been a little difficult for the students to remain focused with so much information to digest, but to their credit, the professors were efficient, informative and well-skilled in providing quality instruction. It was clear that some attendees had attended the Warwick Bass Camp before, so were well versed in what to expect.

"THE LOBBY AND DEMO ROOM ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE LOCATIONS, WITH A WHOLE RANGE OF INSTRUMENTS ON SHOW TO PLAY AND TEST, DATING BACK TO THE EARLY YEARS OF THE COMPANY'S HISTORY"

We caught up with Yolanda Charles for a quick assessment of her week. "This has been my first one and it's been a lot of fun," she says. "I've played at trade events before but I wasn't sure what to expect, because this is nothing like that sort of environment. It's been full on, but I've had the opportunity to hang out with [legendary drummer] Dennis Chambers and play with Alphonso Johnson, neither being something I thought I would get to do in my life, yet here they both are. These sort of things have always been ambitions of mine: the chance to rub shoulders with both of them is something else!"

Warwick endorser Scott Reeder is no stranger to the Bass Camp, this being his fourth visit: for the affable ex-Kyuss bassist, this is a yearly opportunity to meet friends more than anything else. "My friendships with the Warwick family and attendees get stronger with every year," he says. "This week is better than Christmas for me, I have bonds with some of these people that will last many years, and being around this sort of environment is very good for me, it makes me want to go home and work on becoming a better bass player."

The lobby and demo room are very impressive locations, with a whole range of instruments on show to play and test, dating back to the early years of the company's history. We were also given a guided tour of the state-of-the-art production facility, viewing Warwick's timber stock and hearing how they select and purchase their timbers. Seeing and touching various woods, and hearing why they are used



for specific purposes and specific instruments, was enlightening. To see two essentially identical instruments, made from the same piece of wood, with identical hardware, pickups and electronics, played through the same amp and still not sounding identical, reinforces the view that every instrument has a unique tonal fingerprint. Even different sections of the same tree can have different tonal qualities, we learned.

Halfway through the week, we were treated to ensemble performances by four of the bass professors. With 90 minutes available in a jam class, the attendees were split into groups and Professors Hamm, Hubbard, Charles and Goldhammer arranged well known songs such as 'Locked Out Of Heaven' by Bruno Mars and 'Miss You' by the Rolling Stones into separate parts, with several players in each group taking a part, interspersed with brief solos. Not only did this train the students' ears to what was going on in each song, it built their confidence through performance.

Neil Murray, rock bassist par excellence and all-round nice chap, was on hand all week to impart nuggets of bass wisdom, as he has been doing for the past year at ACM in Guildford. "It's easier to teach one-on-one obviously, but here at the camp, the attendees are very keen to learn and they're very open-minded," he tells us. "They're receptive to learn anything you wish to put across, which makes it very enjoyable. I try to illustrate melodic rock bass playing, as well as talking about playing melodies and breaking the students out of the box of just playing root notes. I try to say 'Put some interest into the bass-line' and instantly compose melodies in a simple way: they grasp these fundamental ideas quite readily."

With students from the US, the UK, Russia, Asia and the whole of Europe, the Warwick Bass Camp is clearly on an upward curve and has come a long way since its inception five years ago. The whole package is a real shot in the arm for those players who don't want to undertake a full year or two of academic study, but need a readjustment of their musical compass to get them back on track.

Above all, the camaraderie was second to none. Felix Pastorius explained that the week is a two-way street for the professors. "Warwick run the camp very well, it's a well-oiled machine," he tells us. "It's been a lot of fun and a learning experience for me too. Despite the different skill levels, everyone is on the same level in terms of how much time they want to put in. They're all eager to learn and take something away from this week, which is very pleasing."

The camp will take a year off in 2017 but having witnessed the success of this year's event, places for 2018 (already announced at www.warwick.de) will be snapped up. Over to Dave Swift for a final endorsement: "The Warwick Bass Camp is a rewarding and enriching experience, a truly unique opportunity to meet fellow bassists, bass legends, bass heroes, and of course to study, learn, grow and simply have a great time. What's not to like?"

Following The Leader

Alter Bridge's bass supremo Brian Marshall discusses the band's new album, sitting in the pocket and the greatest fans in the world with Huw Hopkins

Hearing bands and artists say "We have the best fans in the world, man" is clichéd to the point that I don't know why someone hasn't made a recording of it – it would sell in ridiculous numbers. But look at an Alter Bridge crowd next time you're at one of the band's shows, have a look at AB's social media accounts, and spend a few moments chatting to supporters: the level of fandom among its audience in the UK would make Beliebers blush.

With people on this side of the Atlantic desperate to see the bandmembers – frontman Myles Kennedy, lead guitarist and songwriter Mark Tremonti, drummer Scott 'Flip' Phillips, and our dashing interview subject Brian Marshall – you'd think it'd reach fever pitch in their United States of America homeland, but in fact that's not the case.

Chatting to us while waiting for a soundcheck in Portland, Oregon, Marshall explains: "We've spent the majority of our time over there but it hasn't taken off as well for us as it has in the UK. There's something to be said for selling out Wembley Arena, but when we first started touring here, we played smaller shows and developed an intimacy with the fanbase. It really means a lot to us because a lot of that hardcore fanbase are still with us today.

> **"WE'VE SPENT THE MAJORITY OF OUR TIME IN THE US BUT IT HASN'T TAKEN OFF AS WELL FOR US AS IT HAS IN THE UK. THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR SELLING OUT WEMBLEY ARENA, BUT WHEN WE FIRST STARTED TOURING HERE, WE PLAYED SMALLER SHOWS AND DEVELOPED AN INTIMACY WITH THE FANBASE"**

"We were nervous going into this tour with [metal band] Disturbed because they have a different type of crowd. We first thought we could play our epic songs, but we only had a 35-minute set and while those are great songs, on a first listen they might have gone over people's heads a little. We had to hit them hard, heavy and fast, and it was much more well received."

Alter Bridge's new album *The Last Hero* has been a long time coming. The group took some time off to follow a few different ventures in recent years: Kennedy toured as part of Guns N'Roses guitarist Slash's group, Tremonti produced a double album, and Marshall had kids, got married and worked in real estate – so everyone is excited to get their teeth into the new material.

"I needed to find something to do as I had a lot of downtime," says the bassist. "I wasn't active on the road or anything. But with this particular record, Mark was a little tapped out because he'd just done his double album and Myles had just finished touring with Slash, so when it was time to do a new Alter Bridge record, they met and stayed up until the early morning writing, then Flip and I would join them the following day and listen to what they had come up with the night before. We're a good sounding board or filter for what AB should be."

While fans of Alter Bridge and Creed, the band from which AB evolved, will know Marshall as the melodic maestro of the low end, he started as a marching-band dork. "My dad was a drummer so we always had a drum set around the house," he says. "I was always attracted to the rhythm section, which had a lot to do with watching marching bands at football games as a kid. I'd watch the drums and the bass marching together, it was a unique unit. Some people buy into writing lyrics, some people pick up the guitar: I was always drawn to the rhythm section. I'd watch people like Neil Peart and Geddy Lee and they were just so tight –when you can lock in with a drummer like that, it makes the band to me."

Marshall also plays saxophone, and it was his tutor that introduced him to the low end. "My sax teacher was called John Bastone and he was a virtuoso. He played a lot of instruments and I asked him what his favourite was – and he said it was bass guitar. I liked this guy, so I figured I'd take it up as well. I returned for a lesson with him and he said, 'I think you're gonna be a good bass player one day.' And that was all I needed to hear."

As for style, Marshall grew up listening to classic rock, citing bassists such as the aforementioned Geddy Lee as well as John Paul Jones, Steve Harris and John Entwistle as his favourites. "I love Steve Harris' fingerstyle and the way he attacks his bass in sixteenths, and is still able to embellish fills," he explains. "I've always been a finger player. The only song I play with a pick is 'One Day Remains' off the first record, so I've got much faster with my fingers. Keeping up with Mark and his writing has forced me to be a more prolific finger player – and that's taken a lot of work over the years."

Marshall has his own style when it comes to the type of bass he uses. What started out as a long-term fascination with Sadowksy changed on *The Last Hero*. "I used to steer away from the whole active pickup thing," he tells us. "Recently a friend built me a guitar and we were going through the specifications of how I wanted it to feel, and the type of wood, and we got down to finish the guitar, and we had some passive pickups there. For some reason I said 'Let's order some active pickups', and I wrote the record with that guitar.

"But I went to record and there were some issues with the string gauges. I needed to bump up the gauge because we lower the guitars a whole step sometimes, but the bridge couldn't handle it. I ended up recording the record with our producer's bass, a Music Man. I went home and thought, you know what, I bet I could find a Stingray bridge to put on this custom guitar, so I found an Ernie Ball rep online and he put me in touch with an A&R guy and before I knew, he sent me a Stingray Classic. I love the Sadowsky bass, but I just felt like I could not emulate the tone that I got from the recording, so I steered toward Ernie Ball. I'd love to do a signature bass with Music Man at some point. The relationship is a bit new but I'm pushing it a bit."

You can expect to see Marshall playing his three basses, the Sadowsky, the Music Man and his custom instrument – or Blanco, Sunrise and Gun as he refers to them – when Alter Bridge tour the new album around the UK in November. And you best believe that the band is looking forward to seeing the best fans in the world again. "The UK and Europe have been absolutely phenomenal for us," adds drummer Flip. "We saw the passion and excitement from fans on our first trip and knew we needed to keep returning. These countries quickly became a home for the band and we'll continue to nurture that forever."

The last word goes to the man himself. "At certain regular venues, we'll do something special for our fans such as meet-and-greets or a different set list," says Marshall, "and the good thing about stepping up is we're able to do something different each time. That's what we're looking forward to when we come to the UK this time, because we haven't been able to do that on previous trips. This particular package is going to be really great." See you there!

***The Last Hero* is out now. Alter Bridge will be touring the UK from 23 November to 2 December. Info: www.alterbridge.com.**

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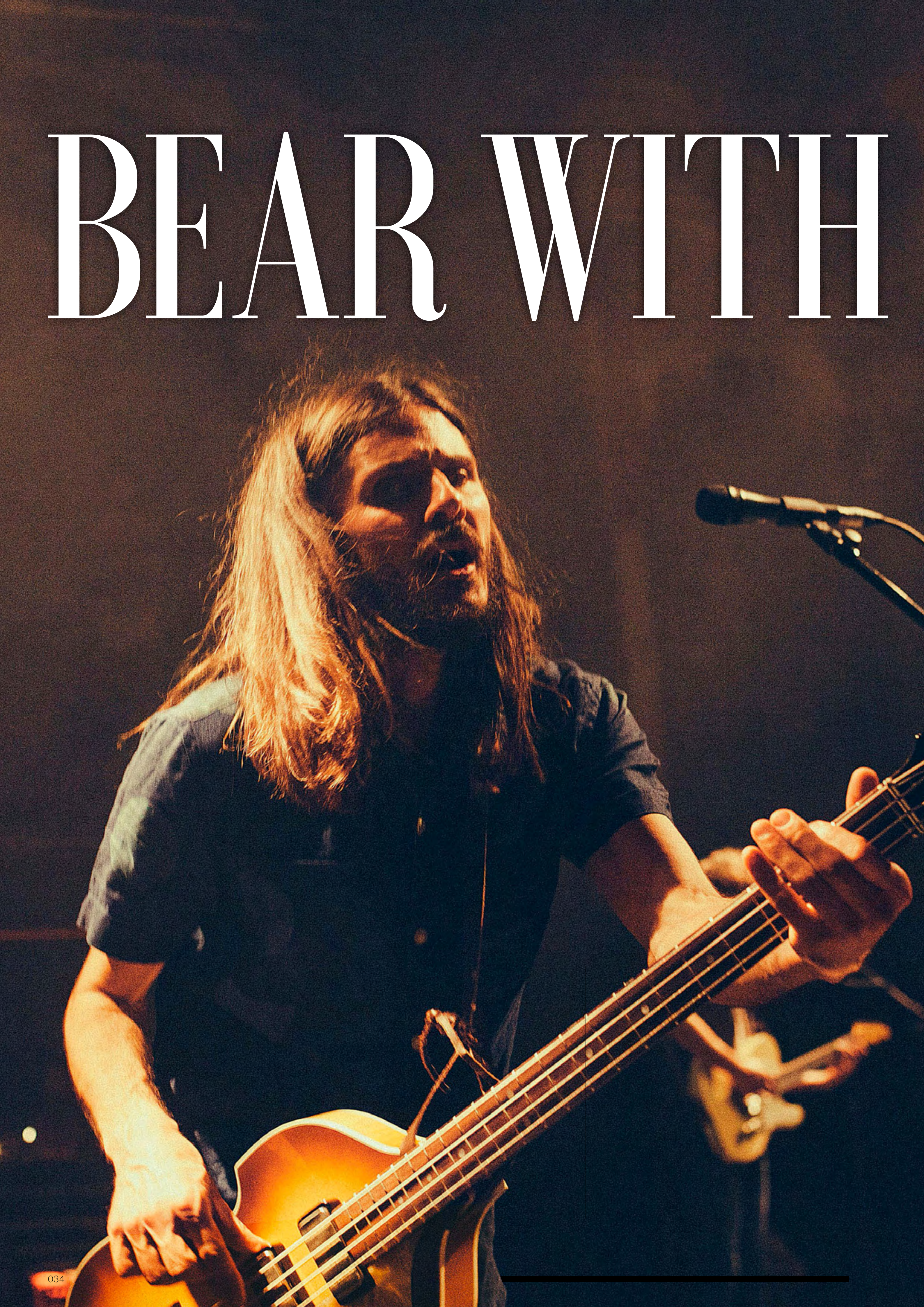

Nick Fyffe, sometime Jamiroquai bassist, talks life in The Temperance Movement with Mike Brooks

When your new album enters the Rock & Metal Albums Chart at number one, your current UK tour is a sell out and you have tours of Europe and Canada lined up, things are generally looking good. Naturally, Nick Fyffe of The Temperance Movement was in pretty good spirits when we called him mid-tour for a chat about life on the road and all things bass.

Looking back to 2013, the success of the band's self-titled first album came in no small part from the extensive touring which they had undertaken. When arguably the biggest band in the world came knocking for a support band in June 2014, the fellows were in a prime position to grab the opportunity with both hands. "We were doing a lot of touring before the first album came out – it actually feels like we've been constantly touring," Fyffe explains. "On the last tour, we got a tour bus for the first time and we have more crew, so it's starting to feel like a bigger thing. Obviously doing the Rolling Stones shows in 2014 was amazing, but we've definitely put the work in. In the States, it would be nice to find a good support slot but they're not the easiest things to come by. It's got to be an audience that you would like to try and poach – that's the idea!"

Onto the equipment arsenal: it would seem that the pedals and active basses from previous projects are no longer the order of the day. Simplicity rules for Fyffe these days. "For recording, I have a 1964 Ampeg Portaflex amp and bass-wise, I either use a '72 Fender Precision or a Höfner, both for recording and live work. I started playing Höfners as I'm friends with Dale Davis [Amy Winehouse and Paul Young bassist]. I got married in September 2015 and Dale came and played at the wedding – I had the best wedding band ever!

"The Höfners are lightweight, small, easy to play and they sound great. I started using them with flatwound strings but there was no definition at all, so I've moved back to roundwounds. I recently acquired a Fender Custom Shop Journeyman '58 or '59 reissue and I love it because it's light: I've had occasional shoulder issues so a lighter bass works better for me. I've got a Fender Super Bassman amp for this tour and 6x10 and 4x10 cabs, although for smaller gigs, I'll just use the 6x10. I also use a Malekko B:assmaster fuzz pedal which is brilliant. I have one pedal here, one in the US and I might need a third one as backup just in case! I used to have a stupid amount of pedals, but I've come from there to now just having a tuner and a fuzz pedal, and life is much easier. I'm just after a nice warm, fat, round tone – and the fewer things you have in your signal chain, the better."

Occasionally, the call to stand in for a well-known name has come Fyffe's way. For example, Roger Glover of Deep Purple has been known to give him a call at the last minute. Take it away Nick... "It was amazing, and totally nuts. Roger's wife was having a baby and he wanted to be there for the birth. It was just going to be for a few shows, but the baby was so late that I ended up playing a load of shows for the rest of that part of the tour, which meant Roger could spend some time with the new baby. It was bonkers, you're playing these songs that you've heard all your life."

So what was the connection that started it off? "I used to live down the road from Ian Paice and I'm married to Ian's daughter, so there were connections there already. I stood in for Roger again when he had a minor procedure on his shoulder and he couldn't move his arm. I said 'Yeah, sure, when is it?' and he replied 'Tomorrow. Soundcheck is this afternoon and it's in Germany!'"

"I literally put the phone down, booked a cab to Heathrow and jumped on a plane. I got to Heathrow and bumped into a couple of the band and they were like 'Hi Nick, what are you doing here?' I replied: 'Well, I'm coming with you guys!' They had just released a new album at the time and I hadn't even heard it. They taught me the new material at soundcheck, so I got back to the hotel, put my headphones on and sat up late learning the new material, woke up the next morning and spent the whole day going over everything again and again. It was slightly terrifying, especially with a band like that where the fans have heard those songs for decades – but I got through it!"

"ONLY DO IT IF YOU LOVE IT. IF YOU'RE BEING TOLD TO PRACTISE, MAYBE YOU'RE NOT THAT INTERESTED."

The Temperance Movement's new album *White Bear* is out now. Info: www.thetemperancemovement.com.

Pic by Oliver Halfin

SWAMP MUSIC

Richard Turner of Blackberry Smoke discusses life at the rock end with Amit Sharma

We're often told that the simple ways are the best ways, and looking at the success which Atlanta's whiskey-drenched southern rockers Blackberry Smoke have enjoyed in recent times, the old adage may very well be true.

"We went back to doing it ourselves without a producer – the old-school approach," says bassist and singer Richard Turner of their latest effort, *Like An Arrow*. "It's preferable for us to keep ideas up in the air and floating around. This band tends to change things all the time, none of us want it to get too sterile or overplay our parts. We don't want to get boring – there should be a little surprise in there for ourselves. The songs are going to change by the time they get out on stage… it's always a little different. And that's fine by us, we don't want to reproduce the record night after night."

For the recordings that made album number five, Turner trusted in an old favourite – a red, white and blue bass made by Joe Hamilton, a local postman and luthier who managed to build him an instrument so good, it's now rare for the Blackberry Smoke bassist to be seen holding anything else. The partnership came by chance, after Hamilton's brother met Turner and explained how he had built a reputation for making world-class instruments in his spare time. Turner saw a picture of Hamilton's workshop and was inspired by the meticulous craftsmanship which he saw.

"I grew up in a wood shop where everything had to be perfect and clean," reveals Turner. "It thrilled me to death to see all their tools hung neatly, and I knew anyone that kept their shop like that would be worth checking out. I wanted a Jazz bass with a thin, fast neck – everything made in the United States – with Precision and Jazz pickups wound by [Californian pickup guru] Curtis Novak. He makes all my basses pretty much sound the same, output-wise. It doesn't matter anyway, I don't really change guitar – I'll play that one for 30 months at a time without even changing the strings! And I won't change them until they break, it could go on years and years until they do."

> "WE DON'T WANT TO GET BORING — THERE SHOULD BE A LITTLE SURPRISE IN THERE FOR OURSELVES"

After that, there's only one other ingredient to Turner's bass tone: his tube-driven Avalon U5 DI box. It's an ethos that very much ties in with the band's theme of sonic purity – keeping the signal as honest and unaffected as can be. There is no pedalboard, and any amps he's plugged into after that only make a minor contribution, if any, to his core sound.

"Though I'm plugged in to a vintage '71 SVT head going through two SVT 8x10 cabinets, most of what you hear is the Avalon," admits the Georgian. "I've been recording with it for years now, I just love how it excites the bass going into the console. I also keep one in my touring rig that feeds into the PA every night, giving me the best bass tone at front of house. I've found that a lot of the players I admired tone-wise were using that Avalon DI somewhere in their rig."

Playing in a band like Blackberry Smoke, you'd expect one of the southern greats to reign supreme as Turner's all-time bass hero. But, strangely enough, his biggest influence stems from a much heavier musical background…

"Believe it or not, Steve Harris would be my number one guy, absolutely," he grins. "Being from the South, you're super saturated in all that southern rock stuff. I heard Skynyrd and the Allman Brothers all the time, to the point where I didn't want to hear it any more. And Iron Maiden *is* Steven Harris. That dude wrote and constructed it all. It's his idea, so the bass was never going to get lost in the mix, it's very much out front, carrying the band. And it's because of Steve I gave up using a pick: I found there's so much more variety with your fingers. To be honest, I'd say British bass players made me the American bass player I am." '

***Like An Arrow* is out now. Info: www.blackberrysmoke.com.**

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'RAT FANS

Tim Commerford of Rage Against The Machine returns with a new band, Wakrat. Hywel Davies has a word with the renegade of bass

When Rage Against The Machine bassist Tim Commerford gets an idea in his head, the authorities start to get nervous. Commerford is back playing with his new band, Wakrat (pronounced 'wok-rat') with his long-time friends Mathias Wakrat on drums and Laurent Grangeon on guitar. Their unique fusion of convulsive hardcore punk and jazz is accompanied by some of Commerford's most enduring bass parts to date.

"I've never been in a band like this," he says. "Laurent and Mathias write the arrangements, work it out and they hand it off to me. That's how we got started – they asked me if I wanted to play bass over their tracks and I was like, 'Let me hear them.' When I heard them I said, 'Wow, that's some seriously crazy music!' I always write in the rehearsal room, sweating out the arrangements, but this band's different because those two guys go into the laboratory and figure out these interesting musical compositions with crazy odd time signatures, leaving me to figure it out. I've never done anything like that before. It's pushed me to try to play 16th notes with three fingers."

Although Commerford also took to the microphone with his previous project, Future User, it's with Wakrat that he really has to bust his vocal chops. How does he cope being a frontman, we ask? "Wrapping my head around odd time signatures was tough. Outside of learning King Crimson songs or Pink Floyd's 'Money' when I was a kid, I had never previously done anything like this or played any music in odd time signatures. It took me a while to get my head around that.

"Learning when to breathe was a big part of it," he explains. "I've never had to focus on that before. I have to breathe or else I'm not going to be able to pull off that bass part or that singing part. At the end of the day, I'm a bass player and my main focus goes into playing the bass. I'm still learning how to be a singer and I'm still learning how to play and look people in the eye and have conviction."

Readers may recall that Commerford graced the cover of *BGM* 124 last year, sporting a rather fetching Steinberger XT-2. Since that issue, Commerford is back with his old RATM bandmates Tom Morello (guitar) and Brad Wilk (drums) alongside Public Enemy and Cypress Hill MCs Chuck D and B-Real, under the name Prophets Of Rage. What does this mean for his bass set-up, we wonder?

"For the Wakrat album, I recorded the music with a Lakland Joe Osborn Jazz bass. Then recently I got approached by Brian Ball, who's the grandson of Ernie Ball and he wanted to make me a bass. He gave me this Music Man Stingray – I think they call it the HH model. I was blown away by the construction, by the way that it sounds, the way it plays acoustically in my living room. I plug it in and I have to drastically change my settings on my amps: it sounded really, really good with my set-up. The Music Man was the bass I grew up on and recorded the first Rage record with, I love those basses."

He continues: "For Prophets, Music Man made me these Stingrays, which are the HS models. They are the closest thing I have ever felt to a Steinberger bass. There isn't a single dead spot on the neck, because they have this integrated nut so everything on the bass is just smoothed out. When it comes to hitting really hard, you don't have to worry about your fingers hitting a sharp magnet or anything like it. Everything is just so solid and they just feel really good."

With both Prophets Of Rage and Wakrat touring together, it's a busy time for Commerford as he has to pull a double shift every show. By the looks of things, however, he seems to be totally in his element. "I'm really excited to be going out on this tour and to be playing multiple shows weekly. I'm as excited as I have ever been right in this moment in time. I'm grabbing my bass and I'm just kidding around in the living room or in a hotel room somewhere and just singing along, working out the nuances of it all. I just love it – and I've never been more inspired to play the bass more than I have right now."

***Wakrat* is out on 8 November. Info: www.wakratband.com.**

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8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue

MARLEAUX

15409 - Marleaux Consat Custom 4 String Bass
15403 - Marleaux Sopran Short Scale 4 String
14167 - Marleaux Votan XS Deluxe, Black Burst
14946 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ Black, Maple Neck

ORANGE

15107 - Orange O Bass, Off-Black
15106 - Orange O Bass Tear Drop Sunburst
15105 - Orange O Bass in Orange
14367 - PRS SE Kingfisher Bass, Natural
11197 - Spector Bass Performer 4, Red
13337 - Spector Coda Pro 4 Black Cherry Stain
14105 - Spector Legend Standard 4 Blue Stain
15370 - Squier Classic Vibe 50s P Bass, W.Blonde
4615 - Squier Vintage Modified Jazz 77, Black
15675 - Squier Vint Mod Jazz Bass 70s, CAR, Used
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst
14613 - Vintage Icon VJ74 MRBK, Distressed Black
14490 - Vintage LV4BB Lefthanded 4 String, Black
14407 - Vintage LVJ74 Lefthanded Bass Guitar, Natural
14489 - Vintage VJ74MSSB Bass, Sunset Sunburst
15268 - Warwick Adam Clayton Solid Creme White

WestCoast

6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red

YAMAHA

14836 - Yamaha 2024 Bass, Sunburst, Secondhand
10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, VSB Vintage Sunburst
6953 - Yamaha BB424X, Vintage White
5634 - Yamaha BB714BS Billy Sheehan, Lava Red
13927 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Black
13926 - Yamaha TRBX174EW, Translucent Natural
13137 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass In Mist Green
14935 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Black
14934 - Yamaha TRBX504 Bass, Trans Brown

5 String Basses

0000 - Cort 5 Models In Stock Now
14639 - Fender American Deluxe Dimension V, Violin
15360 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V Black
15281 - Fender American Deluxe Jazz Bass V, Nat
15530 - Fender Deluxe Active Jazz Bass V, Black
13117 - Fender Deluxe Dimension Bass V Natural
9702 - G&L Tribute L2500 5-String In Walnut
15265 - G&L Tribute L2500 5 String, Blueburst
15261 - Lakland 5501 5 String Bass, Black
15410 - Marleaux Consat Custom 5 String Bass
15407 - Marleaux Contra 5, Old Violin Finish
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
15406 - Marleaux MBass Custom 2012 5 String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
0000 - MusicMan - 2 Models in Stock Now
10960 - Pedulla Rapture Fretted 5-String Bass
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
15466 - Sadowsky Will Lee 5-String, Green, Used
15343 - Spector Bass Legend 5 Custom Bubinga
12406 - Spector Legend Custom 5 String, Amber
11195 - Spector SP5BK Performer 5 in Black
15294 - Warwick RB Corvette 5,White High Polish
15295 - Warwick RB Streamer NT 4, Yellow Polish
15293 - Warwick Corvette $$ 5-String, Black
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
8275 - Yamaha BB425X,Sunburst, Used
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
13193 - Yamaha TRB1005J Bass, Black
7223 - Yamaha TRB5 5-String Bass in Sunburst
10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Acoustic Basses

15234 - Fender Kingman Bass SCE with Case
5393 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Black
5394 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Natural
5392 - Levin LAB150 Bass, Electro 4, Sunburst
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
14263 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway
15157 - Takamine GB72CE Jumbo Cutaway
13014 - Tanglewood TWRBE Travel Bass Guitar

Electric Upright Basses

4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
14482 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass

Fretless Basses

15381 - Lakland 4402 Deluxe Fretless Bass, Used
15408 - Marleaux Diva Fretless 5-String Bass
13875 - Kelly Dragonfly 5 Fretless Acoustic Bass
13371 - Squier Vintage Modified Fretless Bass
14778 - Vintage ICON V74MR Fretless, Sunburst

String Deals

2 Sets of Elite (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Elite (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (4 String) £25 inc P&P
2 Sets of Rotosound (5 String) £30 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £35 inc P&P
2 Sets of D'Addario (4 String) £40 inc P&P

Bass Combos

13577 - AER Amp III Bass Amp Combo
5627 - AER Amp One (200W, 1x10)

Ashdown Engineering

15188 - Ashdown AAA 120 15T 120w 1 x 15"
15190 - Ashdown AAA 30 8 30w 1 x 8" Combo
15187 - Ashdown AAA 300 210T 300w 2 x 10"
15189 - Ashdown AAA 60 10T 60w 1 x 10" Combo
6459 - Ashdown ABM C210T-500 EVO 3 (
15192 - Ashdown B-Social Bass Amp +Bluetooth
8753 - Ashdown Five Fifteen Mini Rig 100
8750 - Ashdown Perfect Ten Bass Combo
15182 - Ashdown RM C112T 500 EVO 500w 1x12
15180 - Ashdown RMC115T 500 500w 1x15 Bass
15181 - Ashdown RMC210T500 EVO 500w 2x10"
5224 - Ashdown Tourbus 10 (10W, 1x6.5)
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
13806 - Cort GE30 Bass Amp Combo
8988 - EA Euphonic Audio iAmp 350 Bass Head

EDEN

13705 - Eden D210XLT 8Ohms Bass Amp Combo
12430 - Eden EC10 50 Watts Bass Amp Combo
12432 - Eden EC15 180W Bass Amp Combo
12431 - Eden EC210 2 x 10 Bass Amp Combo
13375 - Eden EC28 Bass Amp Combo
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13704 - Eden EM275 Bass Amp Combo

Fender

12686 - Fender Bronco 40 Bass Amp
13497 - Fender Rumble 100 Bass Amp Combo
4238 - Fender Rumble 15 (15W, 1x8)
12745 - Fender Rumble 200 Bass Combo
15113 - Fender Rumble 25 Bass Amp Combo
13083 - Fender Rumble 40 Bass Amp Combo
15114 - Fender Rumble 500 Bass Amp Combo

Hartke

14093 - Hartke HD15 Bass Combo
14095 - Hartke HD150 Bass Combo
9008 - Hartke HMH112C Bass Combo
9279 - Hartke Kickback 15 Bass Amp Combo

Mark bass

9004 - Markbass 121 Lite Alain Caron Combo
6239 - Mark Bass CMD102P Bass Combo
5472 - Mark Bass CMD151P J Berlin 300W,1x15
13279 - MarkBass Markacoustic AC601 Combo
6240 - Mark Bass Mini CMD121P (300W,1x12)
5474 - Mark Bass Mini CMD151P (300W,1x15W)
5475 - Mark Bass CMD121H (300W, 1x12)
9940 - Markbass Mini CMD 151 Jeff Berlin
9938 - MicroMark 801 Bass Combo

ORANGE

5234 - Orange Crush PiX 25BX (25W, 1x8)
5233 - Orange Crush PiX 50BXT (50W, 1x12)
15111 - Orange OB1 300 Combo

Roland

6320 - Roland CB100 (100W, 1x12)
4433 - Roland CB120XL Cube 120X (120w,1x12)
4435 - Roland Cube 20XL BASS (20W, 1x8)
4434 - Roland Cube 60XL (60W, 1x10)
5678 - Roland Microcube Bass RX, (5W, 4x4)
15433 - Vox Pathfinder 10 Bass

Bass Heads

15176 - Ashdown ABM1200-EVO IV 1200w Bass Head
14618 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Amp Head
13641 - Aguilar Tone Hammer 500 Bass Head
15115 - ABM 600 EVO IV 600W Ashdown Bass Head
15177 - Ashdown ABM600RC EVO IV 600W Rack
13192 - Ashdown Five 15 BBH 220w Big Boy Head
14171 - Ashdown RM220 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
15179 - Ashdown RM500 EVO 500w Rootmaster Head
14531 - Ashdown RM800 Rootmaster Bass Amp Head
14553 - Ashdown Retroglide 800 Compact Bass Head
13200 - Eden E300 Bass Amplifier
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13198 - Eden WTX500 Bass Amp Head
15484 - Fender Bass Man 800
9349 - Hartke HA2500 Bass Head
9027 - Hartke Kilo 1000 Bass Head
12382 - Hartke LH1000 Bass Head
15588 - Hartke TX600 Bass Amplifier

Mark bass

14828 - Mark Bass Nano Mark 300 Bass Amp Head
10408 - MarkBass Bass MultiAmp Stereo
6243 - Mark Bass Little Mark III Bass Head 500w
9035 - Markbass Little Mark III Tube Bass Head
5244 - MarkBass Little Mark Tube 800, 800W
7962 - Markbass TTE500 Randy Jackson Bass Head
9256 - Markbass Big Bang 500W Bass Head
9941 - Markbass Little Mark 250 Head Black
15271 - Markbass Little Mark Ninja Bona Head
9944 - Markbass MultiAmp
15151 - Markbass Randy Jackson TTE501 Bass Head
9725 - Markbass TTE801 Randy Jackson Bass Head
15109 - Orange 4 Stroke 300 Bass Amp
15110 - Orange 4 Stroke 500 Bass Amp
6261 - Orange AD200 MK3
8231 - Orange Dark Terror Valve Guitar Head

Bass Cabinets

13640 - Aguilar SL112 Bass Cabinet

Ashdown Engineering

15191 - Ashdown AAA 115T 200w 1 x 15" Cabinet
5677 - Ashdown ABM810 (8x10)
6457 - Ashdown ABM115 Compact (1x15)
15178 - Ashdown ABM210H EVO IV 300w 2 x 10"
15460 - Ashdown ABM210H NEO
6456 - Ashdown ABM410H (4x10)
15185 - Ashdown RM210T EVO 300w 2 x 10" Cab
15183 - Ashdown RM 112T EVO 300w 1 x 12" Cab
15184 - Ashdown RM 115T EVO 300w 1 x 15" Cab
14172 - Ashdown RM210T Bass Cab
15186 - Ashdown RM 610T EVO 900w 6 x 10" Cab
14196 - Blackstar HT Metal 412A Extension Cab
13566 - Eden EGRW1264 Head & Cab Package
13197 - Eden EX112 Compact Bass Cab
13195 - Eden EX210 Bass Cab
13199 - Eden EX410 Bass Cabinet
13201 - Eden EX410SC Bass Cabinet
14254 - Hartke 210XL 2 x 10" Bass Cab
9007 - Hartke HCH112 Bass Cab
15629 - Hartke HyDrive 115 Bass Cabinet

Mark bass

6241 - Mark Bass STD102HF (2x10)
6242 - Mark Bass STD104HF (4x10)
5477 - Mark Bass STD151HR (1x15)
9033 - Markbass Traveler 121H Bass Ext Cab
9034 - Markbass Traveler 151 P Bass Guitar Cab
4733 - Mark Bass Traveller TRV102P (2x10)
5431 - Mark Bass NY121 New York 1x 12 Bass Cab
10412 - Markbass NY122 2 x 12 Bass Cab
10409 - Markbass NY151 1 x 15 Bass Cab
10410 - Markbass NY151 RJ 1 x 15" Randy Jackson
15272 - Markbass New York 122 Ninja Bona Cab
6259 - Orange OBC115 (1x15)
14484 - Orange OBC210 Mini Compact Bass Cab
6260 - Orange OBC410H (4x10)
5241 - Orange OBC810 (8x10)

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

© Mark Kennedy

NO FEAR

Prog legends Marillion return with *FEAR*, their new album. Bassist Pete Trewavas talks life at the progressive end

I got into bass because I wasn't very good at the lead guitar! I formed a band when I was a kid with a drummer and another guitarist, and I could have been a good rhythm guitarist but I'm a frustrated drummer, so I started playing bass. As soon as I started playing, I loved it, because I grew up in the 60s and had McCartney and Entwistle and all that musical history wheeled out in front of me. So I started listening to what the bass really was, and my eyes were opened to a whole new world of stuff that people do to make records.

My first basses were shockingly bad copies. The first bass I bought cost me £21 and I think they were too embarrassed to put a name on the headstock. I traded that in for an EB-style bass and put light roundwound strings on it, to get the brightest sound I could, like Chris Squire. I was in a progressive rock/folk band that played pubs, so it was handy to have a bright sound that could cut through.

When Marillion became successful, I got a deal with Peavey but after that I bought an Ampeg SVT head, which I used for quite a few years. It was a fantastic thing. After that, in the early 2000s I ended up with Laney, which worked out really well. I used their amps for years, right until I changed over to Warwick about four years ago. I'm using Ernie Ball strings at the moment.

I play Warwick basses. I did a deal with them four or five years ago now. I've used their basses for years anyway: in 1984 they gave me one of the original Thumb basses that they'd designed and I used it among other basses for a while. I started recording with it properly on the *Brave* album in 1994.

I've tried other basses over the years, but my main bass is still that old Warwick Thumb. Every time I plug it in, it sounds exactly how I want it to sound.

I very rarely play a five-string. I've had a go on them, but I just don't get on with them. I might be a bit old-school, and I know some people use them for the low end, but I prefer a Hipshot Xtender if I need to detune. I have those on a couple of older basses. Or I tune the whole bass down, if I need a low C or whatever. But all my favourite bass-lines were based on four-string instruments, from Motown onwards. We've just finished a couple of shows with Deep Purple, and when Roger Glover puts on his Vigier four-string, you know there's no messing about.

I use a Digitech RP1000 pedalboard for effects and anything unusual that I want to try and do. That tends to be my fallback when we're writing, because I've got lots of different sounds for various songs that we've done over the years. It's very easy to grab a few effects and put them in a chain with that board. I have a standard sound that I use with a bit of grunt from the amp's distortion, which helps to sustain the strings a little bit. That's my main setting live.

I also have a chorus on the new album, which is long and progressive and has lots of scope for effects such as delay, which gives the parts a bit of movement even if it's not that audible. On other occasions it gives a chordal part a bit of an echo. We used a bit of sub-bass on one of the songs, 'The Leavers', because that part needed a wall of sound at the bottom because it was alongside a load of sequenced keyboards.

I've got a Warwick valve amp and cabinets, and we recorded that as well as taking a DI from the bass. Sometimes we have two mikes, one on the cone and one a bit further back. So long as I'm happy with the sound I'm hearing, I leave that up to our producer Mike Hunter, who is a bass player, so I trust his judgement on what sounds good. I've always considered myself to be fairly hopeless at getting bass sounds, to be honest with you. Whatever I do, it always just sounds like me playing a bass guitar!

Years ago I used to search for the Chris Squire sound, and I really liked Mike Rutherford's bass sound on Genesis's *Selling England By The Pound*, so I spent two or three years trying to get a sound like that, although I'm not sure that I ever did, really. When you're in search of the perfect bass sound, you tend to put it alongside other things and it just doesn't stand out. Sometimes you need something that starts out as more of a workhorse and then you can refine it.

When Marillion switched to a crowdfunding model in the late 1990s, it was a necessity. We realised that if we weren't careful, we would become dinosaurs and we'd end up with smaller and smaller advances from smaller and smaller record companies. You can't just put your head in the sand, so we decided to take everything to a more affordable place, near where we all lived, and keep as much in-house as we could. We decided that we were old and wise enough to be able to control everything, and be in charge of our destinies.

> "AS SOON AS I STARTED PLAYING, I LOVED IT, BECAUSE I GREW UP IN THE 60S AND HAD MCCARTNEY, ENTWISTLE AND ALL THAT MUSICAL HISTORY WHEELED OUT IN FRONT OF ME"

We're all very hands-on with everything. Sometimes it's hard just to be a musician! We have essentially become the businessmen that we decided we didn't want to be when we were younger and became musicians instead. So there's an irony there, but in a good way. What we're trying to do is bring our creativity to the business side of things as well. I think we've paved the way in various ways, so it's all good.

***FEAR* is out now. Info: www.marillion.com.**

Pic by Ian Coulson

SCHOOL DAYS

Philip Mann visits the renowned Players School in Clearwater, Florida, for a bass lesson or two

With industry names such as Jeff Berlin, David Pastorius and Damien Erskine being linked to tutoring at Florida's Players School at one time or another, a signature combo being distributed by Markbass and a guest faculty that ranges from Victor Wooten to Dean Guitars' Mick Donner, it's a prestigious institution. I chatted to President Vicky Fulop Berlin to gain a better insight of what's on offer in Clearwater.

Spending some time abroad studying bass may be something that you've considered or dreamt about at one time or another, whether it's for a short musical vacation, or perhaps a greater commitment. With the Players School now offering international courses as short as a single week, those ideas in the back of your head may actually now have some legs – and let's be honest, studying bass near Clearwater Beach with guidance from some of the finest musicians in the state is an idea to savour.

I was first attracted to the PSM due to the name of its founder Jeff Berlin, a musical and educational legend who was a massive inspiration on me both before and after he and I forged a friendship. The School always seemed very specific about separating art from academics, thus creating a learning environment where students could improve as players. But times change, and after Jeff decided to retire from the PSM after many years of teaching non-stop, has the school's philosophy and future direction altered as a result?

"The PSM wants to help you become the best player possible," states Vicky. "Albert Einstein said 'information is not knowledge' and we couldn't agree with him more. Nowadays, computers supply information about anything and everything at your fingertips instantly over the internet. Now, does that make you a better musician? We don't think so.

"The PSM has three elements that set us apart from other schools," she continues. "The first is our curriculum. When Jeff founded the PSM, he wanted to make sure that the school was academically sound, not just in theory, but also putting the emphasis on playing and application of the theory learnt. Many music programmes put too much emphasis on theory and not application. We don't: everything learned here is in turn applied.

"The second element is our faculty: a stable faculty supports a stable learning environment. The majority of our [staff] have been with us since 1996. Our current musical director Matt Bokulic is one of them. Lastly there is the human element, the secret ingredient to cook great musicians! The PSM is a musicians' nest, we nurture them by feeding them with the right mentoring in the most inspiring environment possible."

Along with a regular commitment to private one-to-one lesson time, which is not always offered as standard at music colleges, the PSM has daily full band ensemble classes to ensure a platform is provided for the application of all musical disciplines. A quick glance over the PSM's website demonstrates their desire to encourage students to join them across the pond. Regardless of level of ability or the duration of the course, the school provides for all, offering everything from a one-week full time intensive visit right through to a more comprehensive, federally accredited, 80-week diploma. You'll need a visa to study there for any duration, but this can be arranged by the school's administration team with minimal exertion.

The only thing that can be tricky is air travel from the UK with your instrument. If you can pack as light and as compact as possible, it's highly likely that you will be able to slot your bass into a suit locker on board the airplane as hand luggage. But you won't know until you're at the check in desk – so try to favour a compact hardcase to plan for every eventuality, just in case your bass does have to be checked. Good luck!

Info: https://playerschool.edu

"My jaw dropped the first time I plugged in my Radial JDX, and that's the truth! Now I use it at every live show."
~ Doug Johns
Victor Wooten, Buddy Miles, Chuck Rainey.

"The JDX captures my sound with previously unobtainable control and clarity, offering our soundman a direct injection of sonic rage!"
~ Kerry King
Slayer.

"With the JDX, I get consistent, coherent tone night after night and the guitarists love the sound in their in-ears. It simply rocks!"
~ Eddie Mapp
FOH - Evanescence, Papa Roach, Stone Temple Pilots.

"I own all the top speaker emulators and the JDX is the most natural sounding. Live, I send the feed to the house instead of mic'ing my cabs and I'm really happy with the results."
~ Michael Thompson
Shania Twain, Celine Dion, Baby Face.

"The Radial JDX captures the distortion from the bass amp without any loss of low end. And with such a loud band, it also helps eliminate spill."
~ Jon Burton
FOH - The Prodigy.

"The JDX is nothing short of revolutionary! I can't believe the clarity and dynamics, yet it still retains the grind of my bass amp. It breathes!"
~ Danny Miranda
Queen, Blue Oyster Cult, Meat Loaf.

"Little did I know about the detail Radial adds to my overall sound until I tried the JDX. It's the little thing that makes a big difference."
~ Silenoz
Dimmu Borgir.

"The JDX gives character without the worries of bleed and feedback. I was so surprised how close it sounded to a SM57, I had to double-check."
~ Jim Warren
FOH - Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Nine Inch Nails.

"With the Radial JDX, my guitar sound is much fuller and cleaner in my in-ear monitors and out front, our engineer loves to blend it with the amp mic for a consistently 'thick' sound."
~ Ben Ottewell
Gomez.

"I was looking to make the bass 'poke' through in my mix so I tried the JDX. It's a great alternative to mic'ing a dirty cab. I've been using it ever since."
~ Russ Giroux
FOH - Chickenfoot.

"The JDX is the simplest way to get a true, no-bleed signal from my amp. I mix the JDX with a mic'd cab to get the best possible balance. Love it."
~ Dave Weiner
Steve Vai Band.

Meet the New Box!

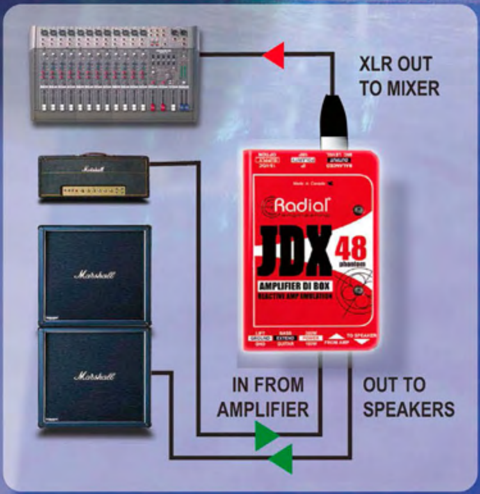
The Radial JDX Reactor™ amp DI box has been ugraded with 48-Volt phantom powering and some great new features!

Sound engineers have long been fighting to get guitar amps to sound good through the FOH and monitor systems. Room acoustics, phase, resonance from the stage floor and bleed from other instruments all play havoc — and that' is just the start... you still have to make the amp sound good with a mic placed right in front of the speaker. To make matters worse, those pesky guitar players are all using in-ear monitors so they are hearing the sound straight off the mic... and they're not very happy with it.

Radial changed the rules with the JDX™ reactive amplifier direct box — the world's first direct box designed specifically to capture the sound of the head and the electro-magnetic back impulse from the speaker cabinet to give you consistently great amp sound, night after night.

The new JDX 48™ now ups the ante by adding phantom powering, a100/300 watt amp power selector and a low-end extender to make it work even better on bass guitar.

Meet the new JDX 48... same as the old box, but now even better!



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TECHNICAL ECSTASY

Opeth bassist Martin Méndez returns for a light grilling by Amit Sharma

There are the bands that dominate their music scene and then there are a select few that outgrow it, surpassing any notion of boundary. The latter could very well be said of Opeth, the Swedish progressive kings who – despite carving themselves a legion of rabid metal maniacs the world over – have drifted more and more towards the mind-melting outer limits of jazz-rock. They've dared to challenge the very meaning of the word 'heavy' by disappearing further and further down the rabbit hole of 70s psychedelia, drifting in and out of endless spectrums of ethereal meditation, like a modern-day King Crimson.

"I feel very lucky," admits bassist Martín Méndez, who himself was a fan of the band before joining them in 1997. "I love the music we play. It's been developing my playing the whole time, and I think all of us have grown up and gotten better with every album. It's a very inspiring band to be in, in that sense. My father used to play bass: he taught me from when I was practically a year old. He had this Paul McCartney Höfner copy, made by a German company called Klein, which is what I started out on."

The Uruguayan bassist left his native country for Stockholm at the tender age of 17 with the single hope of making a living as a professional musician. It was a gut-instinct move that, despite his years at the time, undoubtedly paid off…

Pic by Therés Stephansdotter Björk

"I REALLY DIDN'T FANCY PRODUCING THIS ONE FROM START TO FINISH: I WANTED TO BE THE BASS PLAYER AND COMPOSER THIS TIME"

"I didn't really know what I was doing, to be honest," shrugs Méndez with a laugh. "I was only 17 years old: I didn't particularly have any fears or anything. I just wanted to play heavy music and [ex-Opeth drummer] Martin Lopez, who I played with in Uruguay, was moving there. I just tagged along because it felt easier to have a music career in Sweden than my home country, where it was very difficult at the time… and still is!"

It was not long after meeting Opeth leader Mikael Åkerfeldt in the Swedish capital that Mendez discovered the instrument he'd long be associated with – the Fender Jazz bass. By his own admission, the recording debut that followed – on 1999's fourth album *Still Life* – is the one that witnessed the discovery of his lifelong workhorse and in many ways kickstarted his career.

"I bought my first Jazz bass specifically for Opeth," continues Méndez. "My friend had one that he didn't really like because he was mainly into heavy stuff, so I managed to get it pretty cheap. Straightaway, I found it so easy to pick up and play. I've tried other basses too, of course, but it's the one that has everything I need for heavy stuff and jazzier sounds. Not many instruments have such a vast array of tones available at your fingertips."

This year's twelfth full-length album, entitled *Sorceress*, reinstates just why the Swedish quintet remain one of the most forward-thinking bands of our time. Their kaleidoscopic blur of heavy psych, twisting blues and folky interludes demonstrates more than just fearless musicianship – there's heart and soul spanning oceanic depths. Rare is it for music so technical to evoke such raw emotion.

As ever, the bass player chose to keep his set-up pure and simple – his tone standing firm as the bedrock beneath their dizzyingly eclectic shades of colour. "This time, I mainly used the distortion from the Fender Super Bassman amp," he enthuses. "It's the best I've tried – I think it beats everything. I've never really found the right distortion before – it's difficult because you often lose the bottom end or some of the tone, but that amp works unbelievably well! I also used a Blackstar distortion pedal, which I've had since [2007's] *Heritage*. It's actually for guitar, but I find it works great with bass on the right settings.

"So I have that going into an 8x10 cab. I think you can really hear the bass because of that wooden sound and the way it fits into the rest of the music. The frequencies are way more filled and it makes for a bigger picture overall. Brighter tones might work well for other styles, but that's not really my kind of sound. I don't think it would fit for Opeth."

The bass and drums for *Sorceress* were recorded together in three days at Rockfield Studios in south-east Wales, where classic albums by Queen, Black Sabbath and Van Der Graaf Generator were famously tracked in the 70s. Méndez and sticksman Martin Axenrot had to coalesce and think as one, take by take for every song. It's a method that, despite the obvious challenges, has been working well for the pair since *Heritage*. If it ain't broke…

"Me and Axe usually rehearse for two weeks before recording," reveals the bassist. "Then we come in and do our takes together. I think it sounds better – more natural and organic. Not only is it fun for the two of us, we both know exactly what to play from start to finish. It takes time to programme challenging music into your brain, but once you have it, you've got it. And listening back, the energy is different compared to, say, sitting by ourselves in front of a computer. The rhythms feel more collective and real, you can certainly hear the difference."

Adding to the warm, earthy bass tone dialled into the Fender head is Méndez's picking technique – utilising his fingers for greater emphasis on the lower frequencies, favouring sub-sonic subtlety over high-end punch. The Opeth bass player speaks incredibly humbly of his technical abilities, admitting that he never really forced himself to play in any specific way – it always being more a case of following his ears and instinct. Of all his heroes, he cites Jaco Pastorius as the musician that made him want to understand more about furthering that connection between mind and tool.

"Jaco was the one that really made me shake from his playing," smiles Méndez. "And a player who was very important for the instrument – he came from nowhere and developed crazy stuff in both his technique and what he was trying to say. I always played with my fingers because it was what felt natural and I loved the warmer sound of it, so I never felt the need to use a pick.

"When I was younger all I wanted to play was metal, I had to be fast. There were no other options! Our guitarist Fredrik Åkesson once asked me how I do it, and I didn't have an answer. I don't know the technicalities, to be honest with you. When it comes to longer parts, I might use four fingers, because I get tired with two or three. But when it's really fast, I tend to use three just for speed."

More vital than technique, the bassist elaborates, is the development of the ear. "You can't play fast all the time," he reasons. "A lot of metal bass players might listen to Victor Wooten and guys like that, which is good. But if all you're thinking about is who can play the fastest, that's not really the way to go. It makes music more of a sport and, at least for me, it shouldn't turn into a competition. You shouldn't place too much importance on technique – it's more beneficial to take in other styles: look at some James Jamerson or Stevie Wonder. I grew up on tango, it was on the radio in my grandfather's house all day long! I always loved folk music from Uruguay, which is mainly acoustic guitars and singing… that must have had an influence on my playing at some point. I always think a good musician is one that understands all kinds."

It only takes one listen to *Sorceress*, or indeed, any of Méndez's mesmerisingly rounded work in Opeth over the last 20-odd years, and you'll know exactly what he means.

***Sorceress* is out now. Info: www.opeth.com.**

GEAR

BASSES G&L SB-2 four-string fretted, G&L Tribute L-2500 five-string fretless, Howard Kohr Upright bass 1/2 size with custom onboard electronics created and installed by Alembic founder Rick Turner, custom Paul Beard resophonic six-string cutaway contrabass guitar
EFFECTS Radial Bassbone, Boomerang III Phrase Sampler, MXR Bass Compressor, MXR Bass Chorus, Darkglass Duality Fuzz Engine, Boss Dynamic Wah, WMD parametric EQ, Moog Moogerfooger MF-102 Ring Modulator, TC Electronics Hall Of Fame Reverb, SansAmp direct box
AMPS QSC K10 powered speaker with a D-Tar Equinox Parametric EQ, SWR SM 500, Ampeg SVT-410HE cab, GK MB150S combo

Bass maverick Steve Uccello checks in

MUSICAL ALCHEMY

I like to draw from many styles of music from all over the globe: jazz, psychedelia, Americana, Latin, drone, ambient. I describe my music as 'modern bass-centric meditations'. As well as my solo music, I have other collaborations with guitarist David Cooper Orton, Australian percussionist/composer Nat Grant, and Jeff Schmidt, the 2005 winner of Bass Extremes International Contemporary Solo Bass Competition. Clarified Birds is a solo project of mine that presents music written by alchemists and philosophers, and treats it as a living text to be brought to the sensibilities of a modern audience.

In addition to my creative original music, I am also a working bassist. If I am in a more modern musical setting I love having the low B string. I have a custom-built resophonic six-string contra bass guitar, tuned like a guitar an octave lower, made for me by master luthier Paul Beard. Though I will occasionally use this playing in various bands, I mostly use it for my bass music stuff. Having the two higher strings and the guitar tuning makes so many things possible: I can play it like a standard four-string and stay away from the top two strings, I can play full chords on it, or I can solo up high and do guitaristic things on it. Plus, the resonator gives it such a unique sound, especially with a slide! But when I'm out gigging in various bands as a 'normal' bassist, I often play a four-string electric and a four-string upright.

Learning to play any instrument well takes a tremendous amount of dedication. If you are trying to work hard at something you don't really enjoy, it will be an uphill, and ultimately losing, battle. Be clear about your goals and intentions and acting accordingly. You get out what you put in. I assume most readers, whether pros or hobbyists, probably know that some basic technique and co-ordination is required for any level of playing. I recommend learning the songs you love first, then if you want to take it to the next level get into practising scales and arpeggios. When I was 12 my grandmother, a great multi-instrumentalist, gave me my first guitar. I'll never forget her telling me: "Learn your scales: all music comes from those scales."

My first bass was a Squier P-Bass, made in Japan. I bought it for $50 from a friend in my first year of high school. Like a lot of bassists, I started on guitar and wanted a drum set and a bass in my little jam room so I could have friends over to play with me. Then later, of course, I ended up being the guy who had a bass, one of the two requirements to getting into a high school band on bass… the other: a pulse! I'm a lefty player, so at a certain point I restrung it left-handed and fell in love. Art is one of the most powerful things on earth: an idea conveyed through music has the potential to be infinitely powerful and endure forever. Even if playing music has a small impact of positivity on a small area, that's still a worthy endeavour. When you play music you enter into an ancient guild of musicians and artists. You perpetuate a tradition of trying to express the internal and external struggles that every human faces, and to help people through them.

I have a bunch of new music composed for the resophonic bass and will release a new album in 2017 featuring this truly unique instrument. The album will also feature Steve Lawson on a couple of tracks. A few tracks are already done. Other works in progress include transcribing some of my bass ensemble music for four uprights plus an electric bass and percussion. My music for bass ensemble is written from the perspective of the bass: designed to be melodic and comfortable to play for bassists.

Clarified Birds' upcoming record is called *The Amphitheater Of Sound*. Its cornerstone is a new interpretation of a piece of music from around 1400 called the *Antiphona* by Johannes de Teschen, written in an ancient notation. I rewrote it out in bass clef and also wrote a part for concert harp. It has a lot of drone and electronic elements as well as distorted electric fretted bass, the reso bass, and lots of bowed upright bass. As far as I know I'm the first person to rework this piece.

Also, these days I'm the director of bands at a local high school and am gigging like a madman playing jazz, Latin jazz, Americana, R&B, funk with various songwriters. I'm in a band called the Latin Jazz Collective, led by Grammy-winning percussionist John Nava. I'm also in a band called Along Came Betty which has played at the Monterey Jazz Festival many times, and I'm a part of the Billy Jones Trio.

Info: www.steveuccello.com, www.blackpeaks.com.

GEAR REVIEWS

Behold our world-beating bass gear review section, where we bring you the crop of each month's new, interesting or otherwise relevant bass guitars, bass amplifiers, bass speakers and bass effects. Occasionally we'll review a guitar effect if it's particularly useful for bassists, and we'll test recording equipment and general accessories every now and then as well, but generally speaking, this zone is for bass-specific gear.

We take the ratings that we give each item very seriously. *BGM* is the only print magazine devoted to bass in this country, and we have readers from all over the world, so we're responsible about our conclusions. If a product is worth your investigation, we'll say so; if it's flawed in some way, we won't hold back from making that clear. We're not beholden to advertisers in any way and our conclusions are entirely independent of the views of manufacturers, musicians and distributors.

When you read about a bass-related product here, you know you're getting a sensible, balanced review from an experienced bass tester. Value for money is at the top of our agenda in these cash-strapped times, but on the other hand, we believe in paying for quality.

Right, that's enough from me. Remember, this is just about the only place that it's good to have GAS!*
Joel McIver, editor

*GAS = Gear Acquisition Syndrome (a malaise often suffered by bass players)

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ERNIE BALL Music Man Cutlass

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SIGMA BMC-15E and BME Acoustics

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PEAVEY Milestone

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GENZLER AMPLIFICATION Magellan 800 Head and Bass Array 12-3 cab

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ERNIE BALL
Music Man Cutlass

A new Music Man bass is always of interest. Mike Brooks checks out this passive reworking of a classic design

Strings And Things
www.stringsandthings.co.uk

Two new passive Music Man basses are about to hit our shores. The Caprice and the Cutlass (not to be confused with the graphite-necked Stingray variant) are now available, and whether they are designed to take on the perennial Fender favourites is open to conjecture – but here they now are. If simplicity and 'plug and play' are your cup of tea, look no further!

Build Quality

It's a given that a Music Man bass will be built to a certain standard, capable of taking on heavy gigging and the rigours of the road – and first impressions are that the Cutlass is built from the same mould and comes with classic, vintage looks. The body shape catches the eye as being a little different, but it sits wonderfully against the player's body. The rear contouring is well placed and there is very little headstock bias in the balance stakes.

If comfort and playability are high on your list of buying criteria, look no further. It has a played-in feel, despite being brand new, and the neck finish is an ultra-light satin polyurethane, while the body has been treated with a high gloss polyester lacquer that shows the ivory white finish off remarkably well, the mint three-ply pickguard offering some contrast. The shallow C-shaped neck profile is very comfortable and provides enough depth to give players of a heavier playing persuasion something to grab hold of, while being slim enough not to inhibit those who don't want to have to fight against a neck. If anything, the neck is very similar to a Sterling (the bass model, not the brand) neck, with its tighter string spacing, compared to a Stingray for example.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

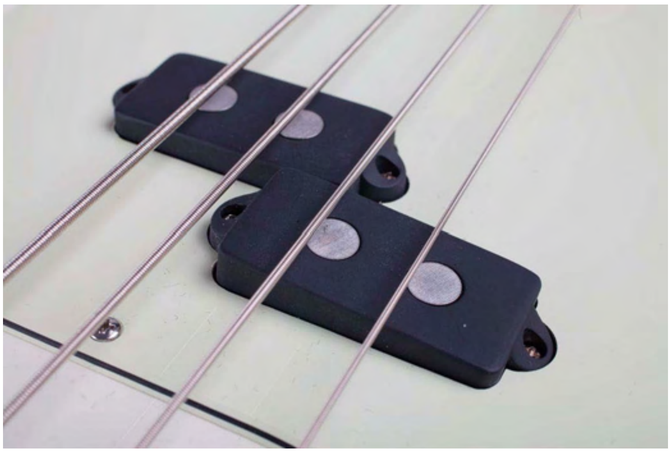
Price | £1,749
Made In | USA
Colour | Ivory white
Body | Alder
Neck | Maple
Neck Joint | Bolt-on, five bolt attachment
Nut Width | 42mm
Fingerboard | Maple
Frets | 21
Scale | 34" scale
Pickups | Music Man offset split-coil humbucking pickup
Electronics | Passive
Controls | Volume, tone
Hardware | Chrome, Schaller BM machine heads, vintage Music Man bridge
Weight | 4.08 kg
Case/gig bag included | Hardcase
Left-hand option available | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Strong, passive split-coil tones, great playability and the Music Man reputation
Minus | High price tag, limited tonal options… but what a tone!
Overall | A worthy addition to the Music Man range that carries all the hallmarks you would expect in a 'plug and play' package

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE



"THERE WILL INEVITABLY BE THOSE THAT SAY THEY'RE SIMPLY TRYING TO TAKE ON THE FENDER PRECISION, BUT TO BE HONEST, IT'S PROBABLY A LITTLE LATE IN THE DAY FOR THAT"

The maple fingerboard has a warm blonde hue, with black position markers fitted on the front and side. The truss rod adjuster is situated at the base of the neck, as is now *de rigueur* on MM basses. The pickup casing is rounded with no sharp edges, the large pole magnets of the split-coil humbucking pickup standing out like a statement of intent. The volume and tone controls operate smoothly with a gradual change in the volume and tone through the whole turn of each pot, the Schaller tuners functioning just as effectively, feeling sturdy and smooth during operation. The bridge is a simple affair: simplicity and ease of operation seems to have been the main design premise for this bass and it works.

Sounds And Playability

Take the renowned Music Man tone characteristics, create a Precision-like passive bass and fuse the two together. This is the result, and it doesn't take any prisoners! The tonal delivery is strong and punchy and although the single pickup might seem like a limitation to some players, the fact that this is a great sounding bass with a wonderfully comfortable neck and body illustrates how good a bass can be if you get the basic elements right. All the classic split-coil tones are there, from vintage thump in the bass and low-mid registers, to a plummy rounded fingerstyle tone.

Open the tone control up and you instantly get some light and shade: the string attack when using a pick is old-school rock, pure and simple, while the slap tone harks back to a time when most of the slap lines you heard on recordings were played on a Precision. Plucked notes and pulls have a real bite to them, so be assured this is no shrinking violet. For those who prefer a rosewood fingerboard in terms of feel or tone, rosewood is an available option, as is a black, diamond blue and heritage tobacco burst as a finish if white doesn't push your buttons.

In terms of playability, this bass is a real winner. There is something about the dimensions, balance and profile that ticks all the boxes, and the fact that the tonal display is equally enjoyable would indicate that passive bass fans now have a new option to consider when purchasing their next instrument.

Conclusion

Those clever people over in San Luis Obispo have obviously taken their time over the design and sound of this bass. There will inevitably be those that say they're simply trying to take on the Fender Precision, but to be honest, it's probably a little late in the day for that. The price tag is a touch prohibitive, and only time will tell if the public are willing to spend this sort of money on a passive bass like this. However, I'm sure that many players will be happy to have a passive Music Man. We certainly enjoyed playing it.

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SIGMA
BMC-15E and BME Acoustics

Westside Distribution
www.westsidedistribution.com

Unplug and relax with two acoustic basses from China. Does low budget mean low expectations?, asks Joel McIver

Handled outside the USA by German distributors AMI, Sigma Guitars is a Chinese-made line of inexpensive instruments originally launched by the Martin company in the 1970s to compete with the then-new wave of cheap Japanese guitars entering the West. Nowadays the Martin heritage is still visible in Sigma's headstock logo, but in every other respect they're just another of many, many East Asian guitar marques to entertain the modern musician looking for a cheap axe. So how do these two bargain-priced acoustics compete?

Build Quality

As far as we're concerned, any budget acoustic bass is going to struggle to compete with the gold standard from recent years – the Vintage VCB 430, a £299 bass which we reviewed back in *BGM* 122. The Sigma BMC-15E we're reviewing here costs £449, so there's no need to compare it with the Vintage, but the Sigma BME is just £16 more, so let's do a quick compare and contrast.

Like the Vintage, the BME is put together remarkably well for the price tag. The big stuff is taken care of – neck join, bridge, frets – exactly as you'd hope, and the details are satisfactory too. The Grover machine heads do their job smoothly (no irritating jerks here – unlike among the *BGM* staff, ho ho!), the battery compartment operates as you want it to and the action on our supplied model is a testament to the simple, solid

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Sigma BMC-15E
RRP | £449
Made In | China
Body | Mahogany with single cutaway
Neck | Mahogany, 34" scale, 23 frets
Fretboard | Indian rosewood
Electronics | Fishman Isys+ pickup, onboard tuner
Machine heads | Grover

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	8/10
SOUND QUALITY	8/10
VALUE	8/10

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Sigma BME
RRP | £315
Made In | China
Body | Sitka spruce top, mahogany sides
Neck | Mahogany, 34" scale, 23 frets
Fretboard | Indian rosewood
Electronics | Sigma, onboard tuner
Machine heads | Grover

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	8/10
SOUND QUALITY	8/10
VALUE	10/10

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Excellent tone range and spec
Minus | Nothing that you wouldn't expect at this price point
Overall | Outstanding bang for your buck, especially the BME

bridge design. You get a Fishman pickup and controls on the Vintage, whereas the slightly more expensive Sigma has own-brand electronics – but what's in a name, unless you're planning to dismantle the pickup and compare the components? Rigorous reviewers though we certainly are, we'll leave that job to someone with an electronics degree.

In fact there's very little difference in build quality between the BME and the Vintage, so we'll stop droning on about the latter and call it a draw. Moving to the BMC-15E, a beast that costs an extra £134, the first thing we notice is that it boasts a mahogany top against the cheaper bass's Sitka spruce, although both employ mahogany for the sides and back. This, plus the Fishman Isys+ system on the more expensive bass, is presumably where the extra ton of cash is going. Like the BMC, its construction is close to perfect, with no flaws that we can detect without a microscope.

Sounds And Playability

Choose one of these Sigmas. Your choice will largely be dictated by the single cutaway and mahogany top of the BMC-15E: with this bass, you'll have access all the way up to the 23rd fret. Yes, there are 23 frets. Why, I'll never know, unless some kind reader writes to me and tells me that there's a solid reason for stopping just short of two octaves. Possibly it's because the 34" scale feels even longer than usual thanks to the nature of the acoustic bass, where the bridge is necessarily closer to the soundhole and therefore the headstock is correspondingly further off to your left,

"THE BIG PICTURE, OF COURSE, IS THAT WE'RE LIVING IN A KIND OF GOLDEN ERA FOR CHEAP IMPORTED BASSES"

so a 24th fret would be impractical. Anyway, you'll just have to bend the strings a bit to get that second octave…

On both instruments, the necks are pleasant in feel, encouraging fast playing and access to the upper register. Sure, as they're acoustic instruments you'll find it tricky to avoid fret squeals if you're unplugged: hook up to an amp and roll off the top end if that's a problem. Indeed, both Sigmas are strong at the treble end and lend themselves more readily to slapping than most acoustics, so funk players will be in their element. Those in need of a monstrous low end should look elsewhere: these basses supply a reasonable amount of rumble and no more.

Simply put, both basses are a hell of a lot of fun to play. The big, growly sounds of the strings will give your folk or blues band serious presence. The onboard tuners – a gift from the world of acoustic guitars – make life easier without a doubt, as do the battery LEDs. Is there a difference in performance between the Sigma and Fishman pickup systems? Not that we could detect, but no doubt the quality of the higher-priced unit will reveal itself if you plan to gig one of these basses night after night.

Conclusion

You'll be absolutely fine with one of these low-cost, high-value acoustics as far as we can tell. The big picture, of course, is that we're living in a kind of golden era for cheap imported basses. Playable, apparently well-constructed and totally friendly to the player's needs, these instruments serve a requirement very well indeed – and don't charge half as much as bigger names might. Investigate with confidence.

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DARKGLASS.COM/CREATIONS

PEAVEY Milestone

The latest example from Peavey's budget range lands at BGM Towers. Mike Brooks checks out its vital statistics

The Bass Gallery
www.thebassgallery.com

At a snip under £200, Peavey have undoubtedly opted for the 'function over frills' route for their new Milestone four-string, but that doesn't mean that basic playability has to be compromised. A cheap bass doesn't have to be a poor instrument, after all – so does the Milestone blow us away or leave us wanting more for our money?

Build Quality

The Milestone is available in four colours but we've been blessed with the none-more-classic black gloss model, resplendent with a matching black headstock, white three-ply Precision-style scratchplate and chrome hardware throughout. The curvaceous body is well rounded with suitable upper chamfer and rear contouring to improve comfort for the player, while the extended upper horn improves balance, despite a little headstock bias, and the deep lower cutaway offers decent access to the upper frets.

The slim C-shaped neck profile is very comfortable, the narrow nut dimensions give the neck a classic Jazz Bass feel and the skunk-stripe flame pattern on the rear of the satin finished neck is attractive. Unfortunately, the finish is quite rough to the touch near the headstock heel, and the fret finishing is rather shoddy, with sharp fret ends in evidence on both sides of the neck. On a bass of this price, you obviously expect various features to be made to a price point, but basic finishing should be a given, no matter what. The 20-fret rosewood fingerboard

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | £199
Made in | China
Body | Basswood, black gloss finish
Neck | Maple, 34" scale
Neck joint | Bolt-on (four bolt attachment)
Nut width | 38mm
Fingerboard | Rosewood
Frets | 20
Pickups | 1 x split-coil, 1 x single-coil
Electronics | Passive
Controls | 2 x volume, 1 x tone
Hardware | Standard chrome bridge, die cast tuners, chrome hardware
Weight | 3.6kg
Case/gig bag included? | No
Left-hand option available? | No

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | A cheap beginner's bass that should appeal to those starting out: two pickups give some tonal variety
Minus | Some shabby finishing details
Overall | A wise investment if you want to see if bass playing is for you

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

comes with acrylic position markers on the front face and black side markers, a synthetic bone nut has been used and the classic Peavey headstock design is in full effect.

The split and single-coil pickup arrangement offers at least some tonal flexibility and being passive, the two volume/one tone control set isn't going to confuse anyone. The open-gear machine heads operate smoothly, as do the controls, and while the bridge is fairly standard with no frills, it does what it needs to do in a basic fashion. One feature worthy of discussion is the Peavey Powerplate, which is embedded into the back of the headstock to improve string vibration through the instrument – which in turn should increase the overall volume and sustain. We shall see!

Sounds And Playability

Passive instruments rely so much on the quality of their construction, the timbers and hardware and the strength and tonality of the pickups: with no onboard EQ to project the signal and tonal delivery, any shortcomings become rapidly apparent. Acoustically, there was little natural resonance from the instrument and try as I might, I couldn't find any sort of tonal sweet spot. Despite being comfortable to wear and play, with reasonable playability, the bass came across as exactly what it is, a cheap production-line bass.

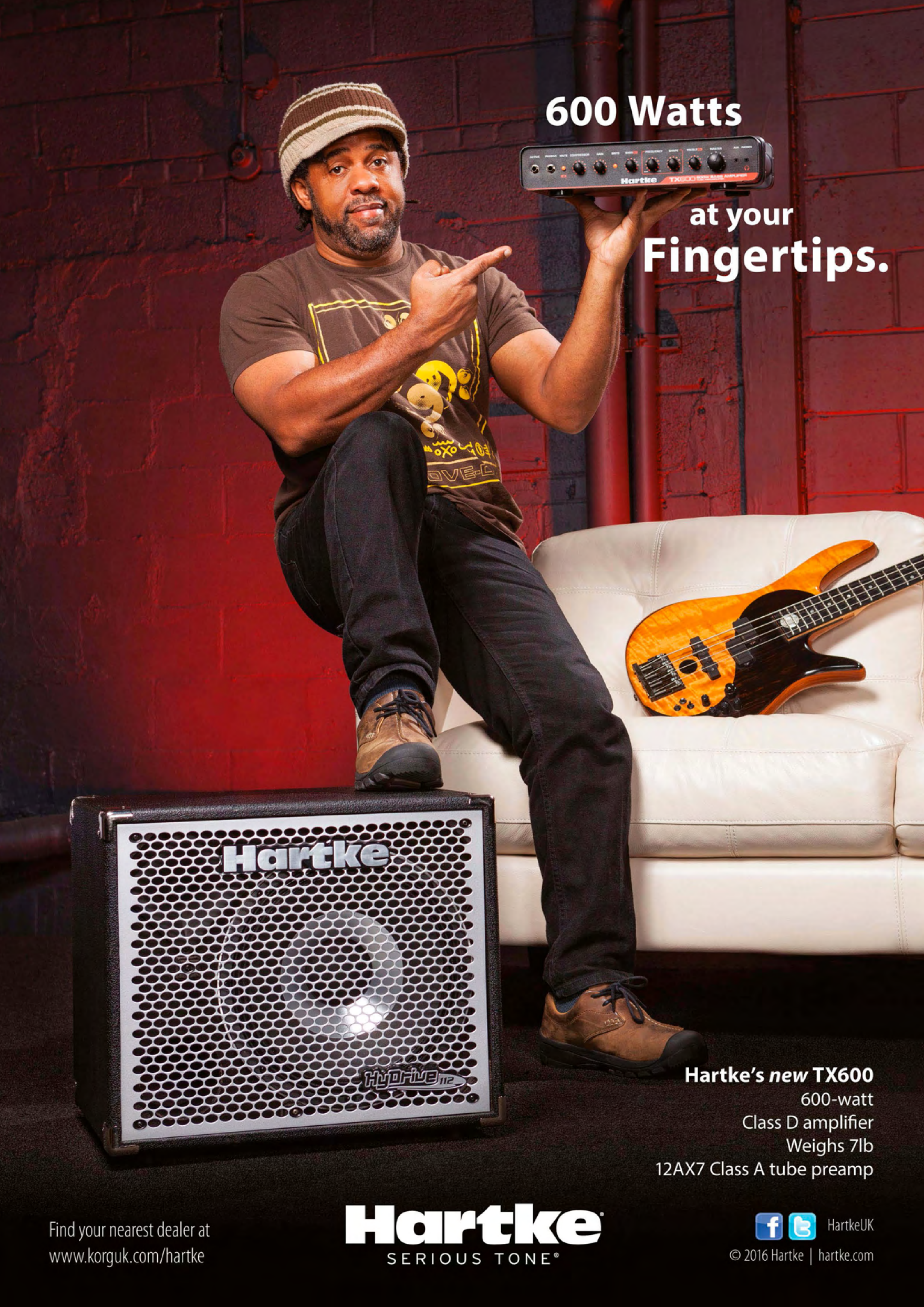
Plugging in, the bass sounded warm and welcoming with a good degree of old school thump about it, particularly from the split-coil pickup. The single-coil pickup at the bridge does exactly what you would expect, adding some brightness and twang, but it didn't bring the bass to life in any respect and in mixing the signal using each volume control, it became quickly apparent that this bass performs best with both pickups running at full whack.

The tone control brings some much-needed tonal variation to the sound palette, particularly useful if you play in a variety of styles. If classic, full-bodied bass tones are the order of the day, keep the tone control down but if you require some extra brightness for pick playing or any sort of percussive playing where you need the upper frequencies to stand out, crank that tone control up. Thankfully there is some gradation as the control is turned up, so you will hear a gradual change.

In all honesty, I wasn't able to hear any marked tonal impression that the Powerplate stamped on the Milestone's performance. I couldn't say that it made the bass sound better or gave it a favourable character, which is a shame. Whether that is down to the basic construction of the bass or the performance of the pickups is hard to say.

Conclusions

If you're starting out on your travels into the Kingdom of The Bottom End, the Peavey Milestone is aimed squarely at you. It plays well, is relatively comfortable and will get you up and playing quickly, which is no bad thing. Some of the finishing is a little lacklustre: sadly at this price, that's not uncommon. If you buy this bass and then decide that alternatives would suit you better, then at least you haven't invested heavily. If you're a beginner, the Milestone is definitely worth investigation.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GENZLER AMPLIFICATION
Magellan 800 Head and Bass Array 12-3 cab

Phil Mann gets hands-on with the eagerly-awaited next generation of Jeff Genzler's design legacy

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Jeff Genzler has earned himself a reputation for designing a list of innovative and superior quality bass amps, such as the Shuttle and Streamliner series. Thankfully, Genzler and his long-time engineering partner Scott Andres have now returned with an "uncompromising and dedicated spirit" to present us with their next generation of bass amplification.

Straight from the box, the Magellan 800 feels familiar. Housed in a chic, aircraft grade aluminium chassis with an extruded front panel, the amplifier is exceptionally tranquil to navigate and interact with, considering the vast palette of features that it offers. LED-supported features such as Mute and PAD switches greet your signal path through a standard ¼" unbalanced input. The first of these features places the amplifier into mute mode while still allowing the tuner out to remain active, accessed from the rear panel. The second attribute deals with passive or high gain instrument signals, with a well-considered attenuation adjustment of -8.5dB of gain to the input stage.

Constructed with dual channel design, the Magellan 800 clearly encapsulates a number of design features initiated in Genzler's former innovations. The clean channel provides a transparent reproduction of the instrument's tonal footprint, while at the flick of a switch, the drive channel emulates some of the smoothest tube distortion I've encountered in an on-board solid-state feature.

However, the real innovative thinking involved in the production of this amplifier becomes evident when you engross yourself in the variable A/B contour feature. This unique characteristic enables you to provide interchangeable pre-shaped curves to your signal path: when flat, the circuitry is fully bypassed; when engaged, Curve A boosts low and high frequencies while simultaneously cutting the mids, and Curve B gently attenuates the high frequencies and accentuates the low mids. This allows an abundance of modern, scooped, slap bass tones, as well as formidable vintage characteristics from a bygone tweeter-less era.

The marrying of this sophisticated contouring system with Genzler's FET preamp circuitry, and an active three-band equaliser with parametric mid-range frequency control and a formidable 800 Class D power amp, makes this product impressive. What's even more remarkable is that the package weighs a mere 2.83 kilos.

Despite the Magellan's high-powered exterior, this amplifier is as much at home as a practice tool as it is on a high-end production live stage. The rear panel introduces the inclusion of an auxiliary input that provides an ideal resource for connecting to a third party device, while a headphone out allows you to practise without the need of a speaker load, conventionally supplied through dual paralleled Neutrik Speakon outputs.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Genzler Amplification Bass Array 12-3 Speaker Enclosure
Price | £699
Made in | USA
Power | 350W @ 8 Ohms
Speaker | 1 x 12" (vented bass reflex) coupled with 4 x 3" neodymium drivers.
Features | 1 x premium Faital neodymium 12" cast frame loudspeaker, 4 x premium Faital neodymium 3" mid/high cone drivers loaded into a sealed line array stack, 2 x Speakon NL-2 connector and 2 x ¼" sealed jacks
Weight | 15.4 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Incredible power handling and transparent projection
Minus | Could benefit from a more sturdy handle design
Overall | Light, compact, powerful

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE

"THE EXPERIENCED MUSICIAN MIGHT QUESTION THE DURABILITY OF THE HANDLE DESIGN, BUT OTHER THAN THIS MINOR OBSERVATION, IT IS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT TO FAULT THIS AMP"

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Genzler Amplification Magellan 800
Price | £625
Made in | USA
Power | Output 400W/8 Ohms, 800W/4 Ohms and 800W/2.67 Ohms (minimum speaker load: 2.67 Ohms)
Features | Input, Signal Mute Switch, Input Pad Switch (attenuation of -8.5dB), Solid State Dual Channel Design (Clean and Drive), Dual Curve Variable Contour Circuitry (Modern, Vintage), Active 3 Band EQ with Parametric Mid Control (Bass +/- 15dB boost/cut shelving curve with a corner frequency of 75Hz, Mid Freq +/- 15dB boost/cut of the variable mid frequency selected from 150Hz-3kHz, Treble +/- 15dB boost/cut shelving curve with a corner frequency of 6kHz) Dual Speakon Outputs, Impedance Selector, headphones out, effects loop, Aux Input, Tuner Output, XLR Direct Output (Mic/Line, Pre/Post EQ and Ground Lift Switches)
Weight | 2.83 kg

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | An almost flawless, transparent reproduction of your instrument's tonal palate
Minus | A slightly larger amp housing than expected for a lightweight amp; could use variable DI output
Overall | A spectacular re-introduction to the work of Jeff Genzler and his team

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	10/10
SOUND QUALITY	9/10
VALUE	9/10

The transparency of this amp is something that really can't be highlighted enough: upright players and electric players alike will bask in a sea of articulation from the clarity and headroom found under their fingertips. Turning to the Bass Array 12-3 cab, Genzler has designed one of the finest compact speaker enclosures I have encountered. Housed in a heavy-duty, vinyl-covered enclosure weighing an impressively portable 15 kilos, the amalgamation of a premium Faital neodymium 12" cast frame loudspeaker and four Faital neodymium 3" mid/high cone drivers stacked in a sealed line array is impressive.

The way in which this full range speaker cabinet delivers low midrange frequencies is extraordinary, providing excellent support for both passive and active instruments. The placement of the 'Array' in front of the 12" woofer is, in theory, supposed to provide a 'single point source' of projection: it achieves a focused, defined playing experience, with near seamless response.

The experienced musician might question the durability of the handle design, but other than this minor observation, it is particularly difficult to fault this 8 Ohm, 350W unit. To celebrate the creation of his new company and commemorate the release of the range, the first 50 units come signed and numbered, with a certificate of authenticity from Jeff Genzler himself.

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IS IN THE DETAILS

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3 LEAF
Doom and Wonderlove

Branch out with 3 Leaf's new FX, says Joel McIver

Bass Direct
www.bassdirect.co.uk

Bass Direct continue their mission to bring us excellent boutique effects pedals with 3 Leaf's new Doom and Wonderlove units. The first of these has been around for a while with the curiously-punctuated name of You're Doom, but thankfully the Seattle-based company have seen sense and given this excellent overdrive pedal a marketable title. While there are hundreds of drive units around for less than the £200-minus-a-pint which the Doom will cost you, this gizmo gives you a splendid range of gritty tones, from warm to crunch, thanks to its excellent range.

A lovely big red LED lets you know if the beast is activated, while four chunky knurled controls for Gain, Tone, Mix and Volume allow you to shape the sound you need. While they all do obvious jobs, combining Gain and Tone is where the magic lies: dial both fully up and you'll find yourself rewarded with a raging distortion that sustains for ages, while subtler applications allow you to isolate an edgy, bitey crunch that will let you cut through all those pesky guitars with ease. The icing on the cake is the Shape switch: in the up position it accentuates the mids, and down it retains much more bass for extra rumble.

The Wonderlove envelope filter is the more complex and thus more expensive unit. Inspired by the Moog bass of Stevie Wonder's classic tune 'Higher Ground', the unit allows you a range of tone-shaping options through a series of controls which you'll need to co-ordinate for the best results. There's no single 'add envelope filter sound now!' button, so work through the Sensitivity and Attack controls for the amount of effect you want before adding subtle modifications via the Decay pot, which varies the onset time in a wholly cool manner.

If you max out the Tone control you'll achieve a super-quacky, almost squeaky tone overloaded with funk. Blend and Boost do just what you'd expect, while Resonance may be the Wonderlove's secret sauce, making a huge difference to the tone to the point where a wah effect is more or less in place. Four switches – Range, Sweep, Band and Buffer on/off – add yet more opportunities to mould the tone. An expression pedal option elevates the pedal to pro status.

Both units are solid, immovable if stamped on correctly and (as they used to say about Stella Artois) reassuringly expensive. Sure, cheaper equivalents are available, but that's not what this is about, is it? At this price point we're looking for bespoke gear that demands a lot of money for high-quality components that do a great job. That sums up the performance of these impressive pedals. Check them out without delay.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

3 Leaf Wonderlove Deluxe Envelope Filter
Price | £250 plus postage
Made In | USA
Features | Sensitivity, Attack, Decay, Tone, Blend, Boost, Resonance controls; Range, Sweep, Band, Buffer on/off switches; expression pedal option
Power | 9V DC

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Superb range of sound-shaping options
Minus | A little over-complex for non-professionals
Overall | Wonderful, pro-quality filter unit

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
VALUE	■■■■■■■□□□

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

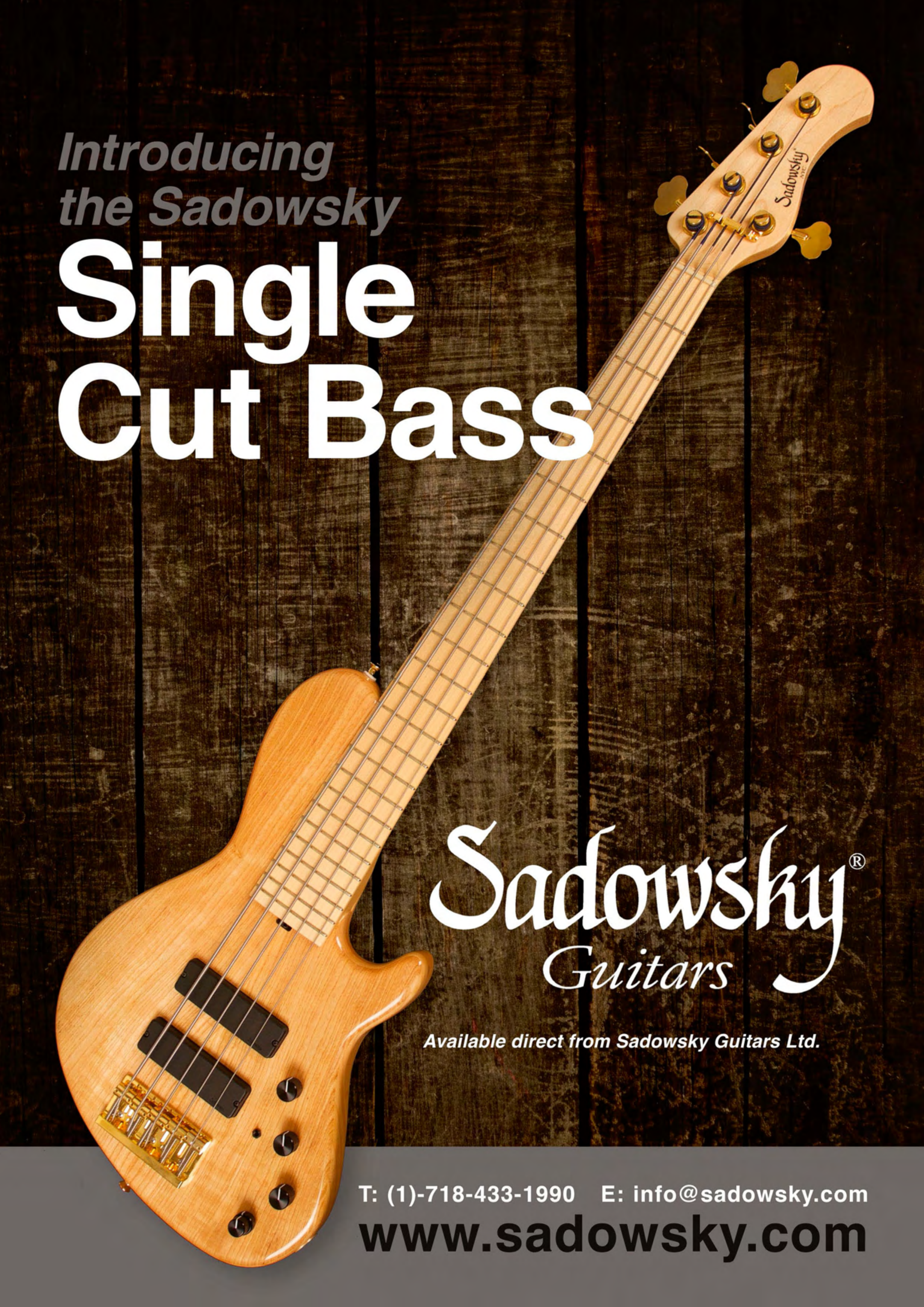
3 Leaf Doom Dynamic Harmonic Device
Price | £195 plus postage
Made In | USA
Features | Gain, Tone, Mix, Volume controls; Shape switch
Power | 9V DC

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Great tone range
Minus | Has stiff competition
Overall | Interesting, if expensive

BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■■
SOUND QUALITY	■■■■■■■■■□
VALUE	■■■■■■■■□□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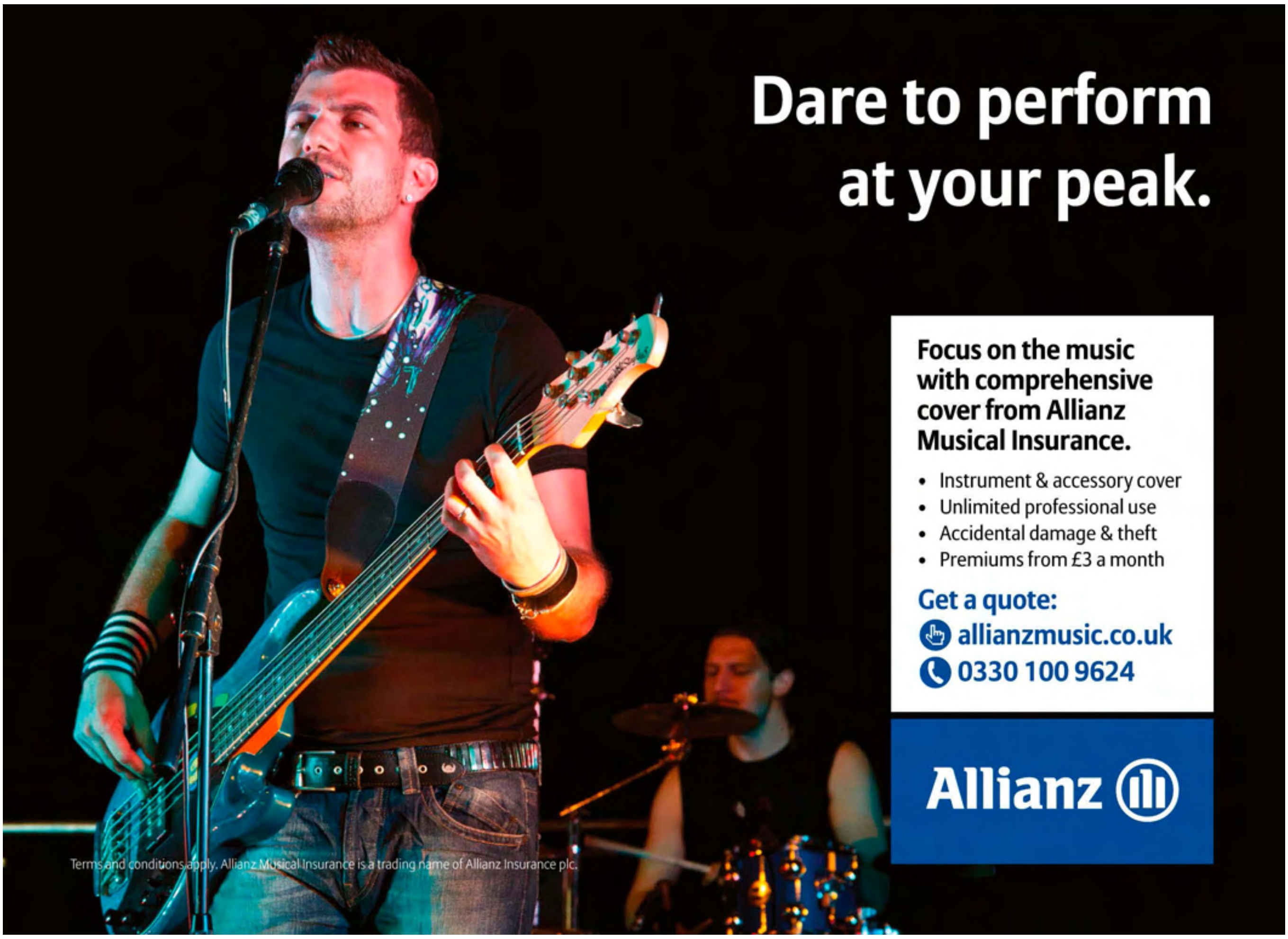

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BASS

TUITION

Making you a better bass player

Welcome to our redesigned tuition section, in which *Bass Guitar Magazine* collates the wit and wisdom of the *crème de la crème* of the electric and upright bass world. We're fortunate enough to have some serious talent on the team, from world-class music educators to experienced touring musicians, who between them have laid down the low notes in every studio, club and arena in the civilised world. Note that we've divided the columns according to Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced level for easy reference. Whether you're looking to improve your playing technique, expand your awareness of theory, set up your rig to sound like your particular bass hero or simply get on a bus and tour, we provide the answers you need here. What are you waiting for? Dive in...
Joel McIver, editor

Ellen O'Reilly is a freelance bassist and vocalist currently studying at ICMP. Ellen has extensive experience in gigging, studio and television work.

ELLEN O'REILLY BEGINNER'S THEORY 72

Paul Geary attended the Berklee College of Music in Boston and the Musicians' Institute of Technology. He also heads up the Academy Of Contemporary Music's bass school.
www.paulgeary.com

PAUL GEARY BEGINNER'S TECHNIQUES 74

Stuart Clayton is a professional bassist and writer with over 20 years of experience in the industry. He runs the bass department at BIMM Bristol and Bassline Publishing, which has published a range of tuition and tab books.
www.stuartclayton.com www.basslinepublishing.com

STUART CLAYTON INTERMEDIATE THEORY 76

Rob Statham has amassed over 25 years as a professional freelance bass player. He has played in a wide range of musical settings, including jazz, blues, prog and classical, and he has taught for the past three years at BIMM London.

ROB STATHAM INTERMEDIATE TECHNIQUES 78

Head of the Bass Department at BIMM Brighton, Franc has worked with artists such as Steve Howe (Yes), Lisa Moorish, and Mike Lindup (Level 42). Franc uses Jeff Chapman basses and Elites strings.
www.francoshea.com

FRANC O'SHEA ADVANCED THEORY 80

Say hello to advanced techniques columnist Philip Mann, star of studio and stage. Ready to get those fingers flying? Mann up...

PHILIP MANN ADVANCED TECHNIQUES 84

David Etheridge studied double bass at the Royal College of Music. Since then he's worked with musicians such as Nigel Kennedy and Martin Taylor. David teaches double and electric bass and is the MD of two big bands and a 55-piece jazz orchestra.

DAVID ETHERIDGE UPRIGHT BASS 86

Steve Lawson is the UK's most celebrated solo bass guitarist, with 15 years of touring and 36 solo and collaborative albums to his name. He also lectures at colleges around the world.
www.stevelawson.net

STEVE LAWSON EFFECTS MAESTRO 88

Andy Baxter has established a name as one of the most knowledgeable dealers of vintage basses in the UK. Andy stocks a wide range of highly collectable basses and offers a personal buying experience and excellent customer support.

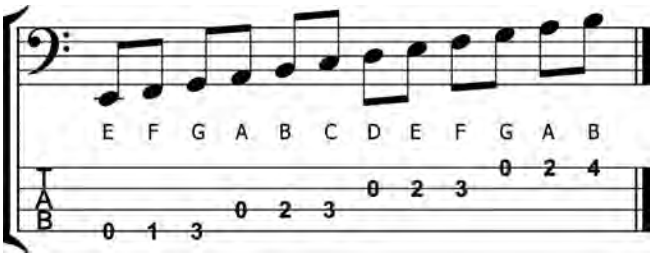
ANDY BAXTER BAXTER ON BASS 90

BGM Notation Legend

The following is a guide to the notation symbols and terminology used in *Bass Guitar Magazine*

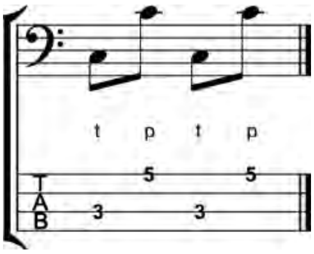
The Stave: most music written for the bass guitar uses the bass clef. The example to the right shows the placement of the notes on the stave.

Tablature: this is a graphical representation of the music. Each horizontal line corresponds with a string on the bass guitar, with the lowest line representing the lowest pitched string (E). The numbers represent the frets to be played. Numbers stacked vertically indicate notes that are played together. Where basses with five or six strings are required, the tablature stave will have five or six lines as necessary.



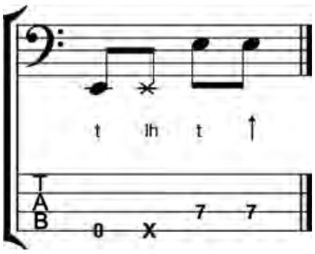
Notes shown in brackets indicate that a note has been tied over from a previous bar.

PLAYING TECHNIQUES



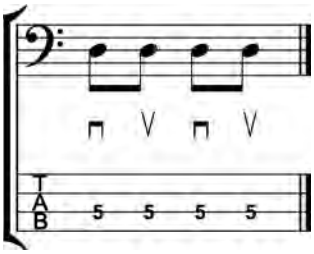
SLAP AND POP TECHNIQUE

Notes slapped with the thumb are marked with a 't', notes popped with the fingers marked with a 'p'



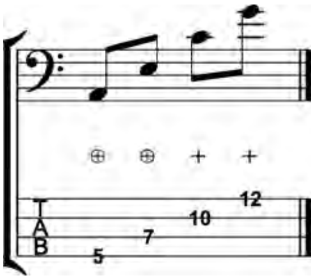
ADVANCED SLAP TECHNIQUE

Fretting hand slaps are marked 'lh' and double thumbing upstrokes are shown with an upward pointing arrow



PLECTRUM TECHNIQUE

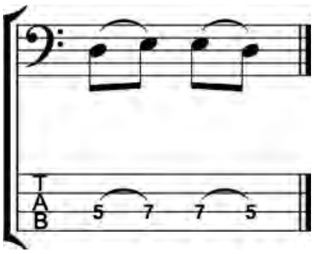
Where necessary, down and upstrokes with the pick will be shown using these symbols (down-up-down-up)



TAPPING TECHNIQUES

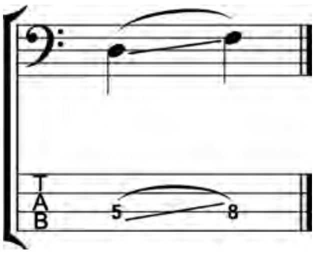
Fretting hand taps are shown with a '+' in a circle. Picking hand taps are shown with '+'. Specific fingers will be shown with numbers if necessary

FRETTING TECHNIQUES



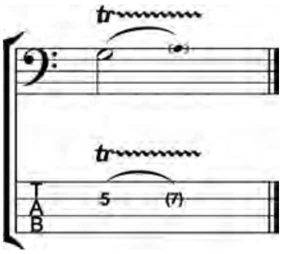
HAMMER-ON AND PULL-OFF

Hammer-ons and pull-offs are shown with a slur over the notes. Only the first note is plucked by the picking hand



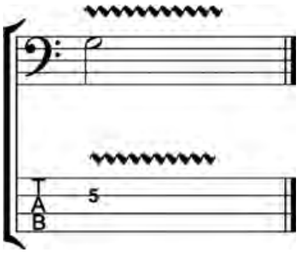
SLIDE (GLISSANDO)

Slides are performed by playing the first note then sliding the fretting finger up to the second note



TRILLS

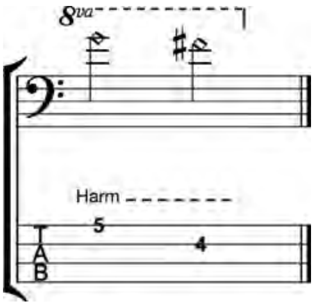
Trills are performed by rapidly alternating between the two notes shown using hammer-ons and pull-offs



VIBRATO

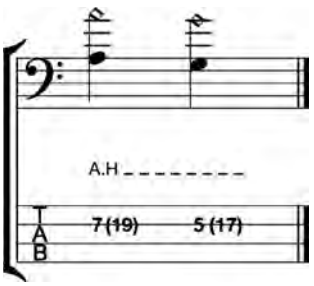
The pitch of the note is altered by repeatedly bending the string up and back with the fretting finger

PLAYING HARMONICS



NATURAL HARMONICS

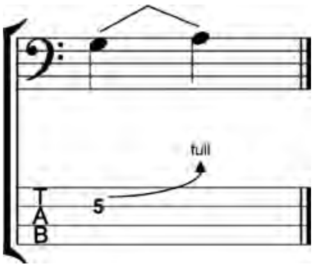
The note is played as a harmonic by lightly touching the string above the fret indicated



ARTIFICIAL HARMONICS

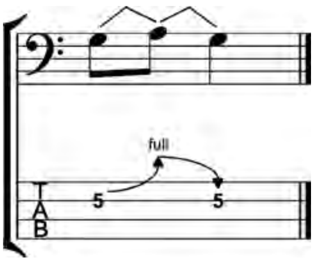
Pluck the string while fretting the lower note and placing the edge of the picking hand thumb an octave higher (the note shown in brackets)

BENDING NOTES



BEND

The note is bent upwards to the interval specified: ½ = semitone, full = tone



BEND AND RELEASE

The note is bent up to the interval indicated then released back to its original pitch

THE FRONT LINE

Want to make it as a professional bassist? Listen up as BGM's world-class bass team reports back from the tourbus

THE JAZZ BASSIST

RUTH GOLLER

Soloing tips from jazz warrior Ruth

Bass solos, even in jazz, are rarer than horn solos and therefore it can be hard to get enough practice doing them. To me, it seems that soloing requires a different part of the brain than playing bass-lines. The key is to listen to lots of solos, transcribe them, learn them in different keys, and practise your harmony on the instrument, to be able to move around freely. Only then you can really improvise. All of the above are the obvious things to practise to improve your improvisations. As bass-players we often forget one very important thing, which is 'space'. Because we don't need to breathe in order to keep playing, technically we can play continuously instead of using shorter phrases like horn players. However, this can mean that one phrase turns into another and your solo becomes one shapeless line without beginning, end, tension or release.

I like to think of improvisation and music in general as a conversation. This may mean leaving space for other voices, or including moments of silence to take in what was just said. In all cases, the solo always breathes. When I play, I imagine being a horn player and combine my phrases with my breathing. This also means my posture is better because I don't forget to breathe, which happens all the time when I concentrate. This can be hard to practise at first, so it helps to give yourself strict limitations of when to play over a certain tune. Choose a standard, for example, and mark out which bars you want to play over. This forces you to be creative within a set structure and you start hearing phrases in different lengths. Make yourself start and finish your phrases on specific downbeats and upbeats within the bar. This might seem restrictive at first, but it's good to be restrictive in a practising context: it'll give you more freedom later on.

www.ruthgoller.com

THE METALHEAD

IVAN MUNGUIA

Deeds Of Flesh's Ivan invites us into his home studio

Welcome back! Deeds Of Flesh are in the middle of working on our new record, and as we ramp up to start tracking the album, let me give you a bit of insight into my bass recording process. At this point I am doing prep work – sitting down, writing out every bass-line and practising everything along to pre-production tracks recorded by my guitarist. Once I feel prepared, I'll begin the tracking process. I don't rush prepping and don't record until I feel fully ready.

This luxury is enabled by one simple fact: I don't record in the studio anymore. Getting to record in a big fancy studio when I was younger was an awesome experience but being a bassist in a death metal band and not having the budget of, say, Cannibal Corpse, I was pretty disappointed when the guitars and drums took up all the recording time and I was left with a measly half day to record all my bass tracks in order to keep the recording on schedule.

Both Brain Drill's *Quantum Catastrophe* and Arkaik's *Metamorphignition* were recorded in roughly six hours each. When I listen to those albums, there are plenty of moments which make me think, "Man, if I had more time I would have added this, or changed that." I learned my lesson and now I do all my tracking in the comfort of my home studio. I use Logic, a Focusrite interface, and a Macbook Pro to record dry, completely un-effected tracks and then send them over to the studio engineer who takes the tracks and re-amps them, sending the track's signal through an amplifier and effects to get the tone you hear on the album. This method affords me a ton of time to dial in the perfect tone. Tracking bass in my home studio gives me the flexibility to get the tracks done at my own pace and take as long as the annoying perfectionist in me allows. The downside, besides going through heaps of strings, is that it's sometimes hard to know when to stop fiddling and commit to a take. While I do miss the rush of being under the gun in the studio, nailing my tracks and being the hero who saves the recording budget, there's nothing like being 100 per cent satisfied with a recording that will live on long after you've taken your final dirt nap. Until next time!

> "TRACKING BASS IN MY HOME STUDIO GIVES ME THE FLEXIBILITY TO GET THE TRACKS DONE AT MY OWN PACE AND TAKE AS LONG AS THE ANNOYING PERFECTIONIST IN ME ALLOWS"

www.deedsoffleshmetal.com

THE ALTERNATIVE ROCKER

MICHAEL MCKEEGAN

Stay healthy out there, says Therapy?'s bass guru

Last month we talked simple housekeeping to keep gear functioning at its best, but there's an important flipside: making sure that your mind and body are as well looked-after as your guitars and backline. It's important to keep sharp on tour, which, by its very nature, can be a disorientating and physically hard environment to contend with, sometimes to the detriment of your playing. I don't need to state the obvious about getting early nights and drinking as much water as possible, but there are other ways to keep that equilibrium and deliver peak playing. The old adage of 'what goes in comes out' rings true. Eat a proper hot meal each evening and do not skip on that meal, regardless of what else you've eaten that day. We try and eat at least three hours before the show to give ourselves time to digest and get the best out of the nutrition. There's no point scoffing a roast if you have to get onstage an hour later, feeling bloated and sleepy.

Winding down is equally important. Most musicians are night owls. Sadly that's often not by choice: after the massive adrenaline and concentration rush of a gig or session, it's hard to get off to sleep. That's all well and good if the private jet leaves at noon the next day and you have a late hotel checkout, but the touring reality is an increasing spiral of sleep deprivation which affects your wellbeing. Grab whatever quiet time for naps you can: an hour after sound check can be just the tonic to get you back in the zone for the show. And go easy on the coffee – there's nothing worse than trying to hold a decent groove down with the caffeine jitters. Sometimes it's good just to take a walk away from the rest of the band, out of the venue. Go see a different part of the town or a park. Even something as mundane as going to buy supplies can give you a break from the touring bubble. Bring a book (*or this mag! – Ed*) along and read for an hour in a local cafe: it's a sure-fire way to distract the brains from any tour stresses that might be building up. You don't need to live like a monk, by the way: a few blowouts or late nights never hurt anyone. But balance them with proper rest and quiet time. Treat your body well: that will ensure a well-treated mind, a well-treated guitar – and as a result, a well-treated audience.

www.therapyquestionmark.co.uk

THE EXTENDED-RANGE SPECIALIST

STEWART MCKINSEY

Ten-string-wielding Sith Lord McKinsey on ERB soloing

We've looked at the composed solo mindset before playing, and approaching the moment as a composer. Now let's tie all of that into extended range. You can go both higher and lower than a standard instrument. You have developed techniques specific to your bass. Use these elements. Playing a melodic phrase an octave or more below where the audience has heard it can be very powerful. Executing it in the range of a guitar or delivering it in a pianistic style with two-handed tapping can also be very effective. Have you considered the ways you can employ the strings of an ERB like a percussion instrument, by muting them and striking them with fingers, palm or in slap-and-pop style minus the notes? Using this technique as a kind of punctuation can pleasantly surprise a listener.

Taking the solo in an unexpected direction, like playing in a series of chords or arpeggios, can be very memorable. This can still be combined with phrasing and rhythmic punctuation to add dimension and depth to your performance. Consider using drone tones, allowing one or more of your strings to ring throughout the solo, but be careful as dissonance is easy to create and is not always your friend. To do this, make sure you're using a chord tone or tones and that you choose what you play against the drone wisely. If you haven't done this before, I don't recommend it in a solo in front of a crowd, but it is very unusual in western music – at least on bass – and it can be either subtle (the sub F#) or elegant (a high C or F). This can also be done with harmonics and may be less jarring. Remember, you have been developing your vocabulary. Now is your chance to use it to say something about you, the moment and the music. Try to find a balance between those three elements and not to let one dominate the others. You are working towards pure communication, to the moment you can play without thinking, but the journey is at least as important as arriving. Allow yourself mistakes without beating yourself up for making them. Music is a human endeavour and perfection is a fine goal, but we call it 'playing' for a reason. This solo is for you and the audience, so enjoy it!

www.facebook.com + search 'Stewart McKinsey'

APP EXTRA
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ELLEN O'REILLY

Chords made easy with beginner's guru Ellen

Hey bass buddies! In the last few columns we have looked at how chords are formed and how we build these up from the major scale. This is known as harmonising the major scale. We built up each chord starting from a different step or degree of the major scale in intervallic leaps of thirds; we built up three-note chords, or triads; and then we progressed onto four-note chords, which are also known as seven chords. They get this name because of the intervals used, which are root, 3rd, 5th and 7th.

There are four types of chords that are created when harmonising the major scale as follows:

Major 7	**Root, major 3rd, perfect 5th and major 7th**
Minor 7	**Root, minor 3rd, perfect 5th and major 7th**
Dominant 7	**Root, major 3rd, perfect 5th and flat 7th**
Half-diminished	**Root, minor 3rd, flat 5th and minor 7th**

These chords can also be represented in shorthand as follows:

Major 7	**Maj7**
Minor 7	**Min7**
Dominant 7	**Dom7 or just 7**
Half-diminished	**Min7b5**

These chords are assigned roman numerals to show you which degree of the major scale they are built from. For example, in the key of C major they are:

The 1 chord	**I**	**C maj7**
The 2 chord	**II**	**D min7**
The 3 chord	**III**	**E min7**
The 4 chord	**IV**	**F maj7**
The 5 chord	**V**	**G7**
The 6 chord	**VI**	**A min7**
The 7 chord	**VII**	**B min7b5**

How can we use this in the real world? Well let's look at the whole reason we do what we do – to play songs! Many of us bass players, regardless of musical tastes and backgrounds, will find ourselves playing contemporary music throughout our musical careers, so let's look at what makes a pop song. We've already seen how we build up chords in a particular key, so now let's examine a chord progression.

Chord progressions are chords from a given key played in a particular order. Let's take some well-known pop songs and identify the chord progressions they use.

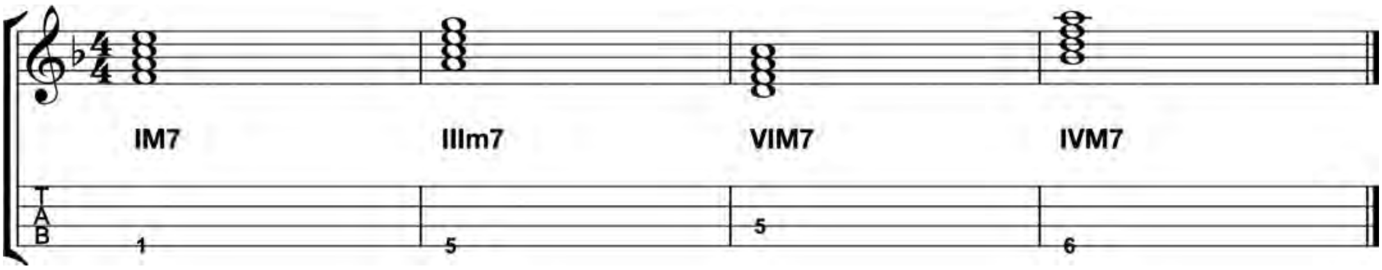
In the Katy Perry song 'Firework', we are using chords from the key of G major. The verse and chorus chords are G maj7, A min7, E min7 and C maj7, so in roman numerals that chord progression would be known as a I, II, VI, IV.

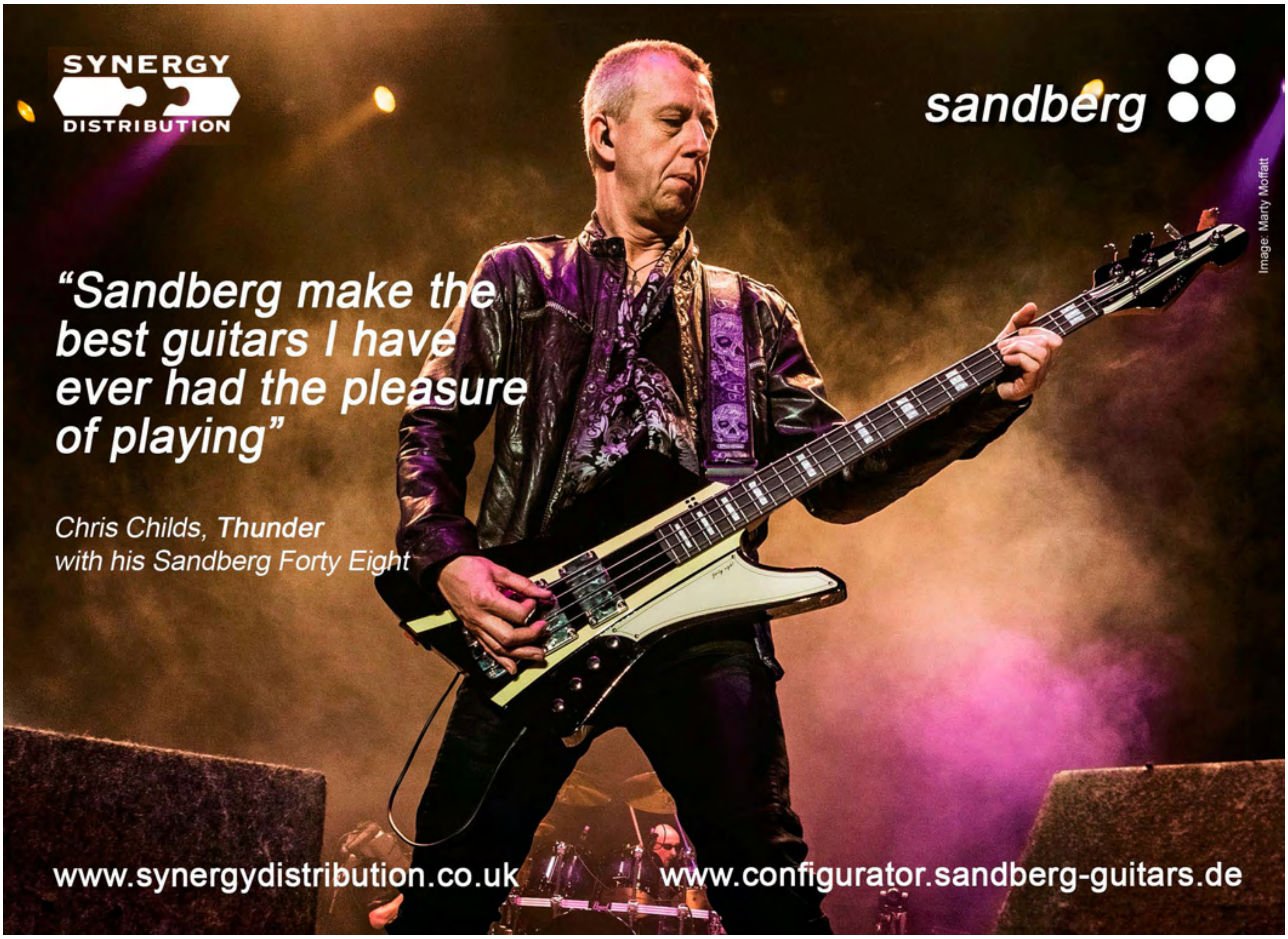
The Jessie J song 'Pricetag' is in the key of F major and uses the chords: F maj7, A min7, D min7 and Bb maj7, which is a I, III, VI, IV. This progression is shown in **example 1**.

Two of the most common chord progressions are I, IV, V, found in many blues and rock songs, and I, V, VI, IV, found in hundreds of pop songs. U2's hit 'With Or Without You' uses this progression in the key of D major, so the chords are D maj7, A7, B min7 and G maj7. Check out a YouTube video called 'Axis of Awesome – 4 Chord Song' and you'll be amazed at how many artists use this very popular progression!

"MANY OF US BASS PLAYERS, REGARDLESS OF MUSICAL TASTES AND BACKGROUNDS, WILL FIND OURSELVES PLAYING CONTEMPORARY MUSIC THROUGHOUT OUR MUSICAL CAREERS, SO LET'S LOOK AT WHAT MAKES A POP SONG"

EXAMPLE 1

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PAUL GEARY

More blues explorations with session and stage veteran Geary

This month, let's continue analysing the blues genre and style of playing. So far we have looked at two basic forms of blues progression: the slow change and quick change 12-bar blues. Remember that the 'slow' and the 'quick' relate to when we change chords within the arrangement, not the tempo or speed at which we play the form. This time I have mapped out and transcribed solutions for two slow change 12-bar blues progressions. The two examples should be played in swing time at 90 BPM. The main emphasis this time is based around a rhythmical figure called a triplet.

> "THE MAIN EMPHASIS THIS TIME IS BASED AROUND A RHYTHMICAL FIGURE CALLED A TRIPLET"

EXAMPLE 1

Bar one starts off with a dotted eighth-note figure followed by a sixteenth note. This will be a recurring feature and rhythm within these examples. Remember that a dot after a note increases its value by half. A dotted eighth note is the equivalent of an eighth and sixteenth note in time and duration.

Use the open A string for the first two notes. We then switch to the fourth fret on the A string and play the same rhythmical figure on C#. Switch strings to play the E notes on the D string at the second fret. We then finish off the bar with the triplet (a triplet figure is a way of fitting three notes into the space of two; this one is an eighth-note triplet).

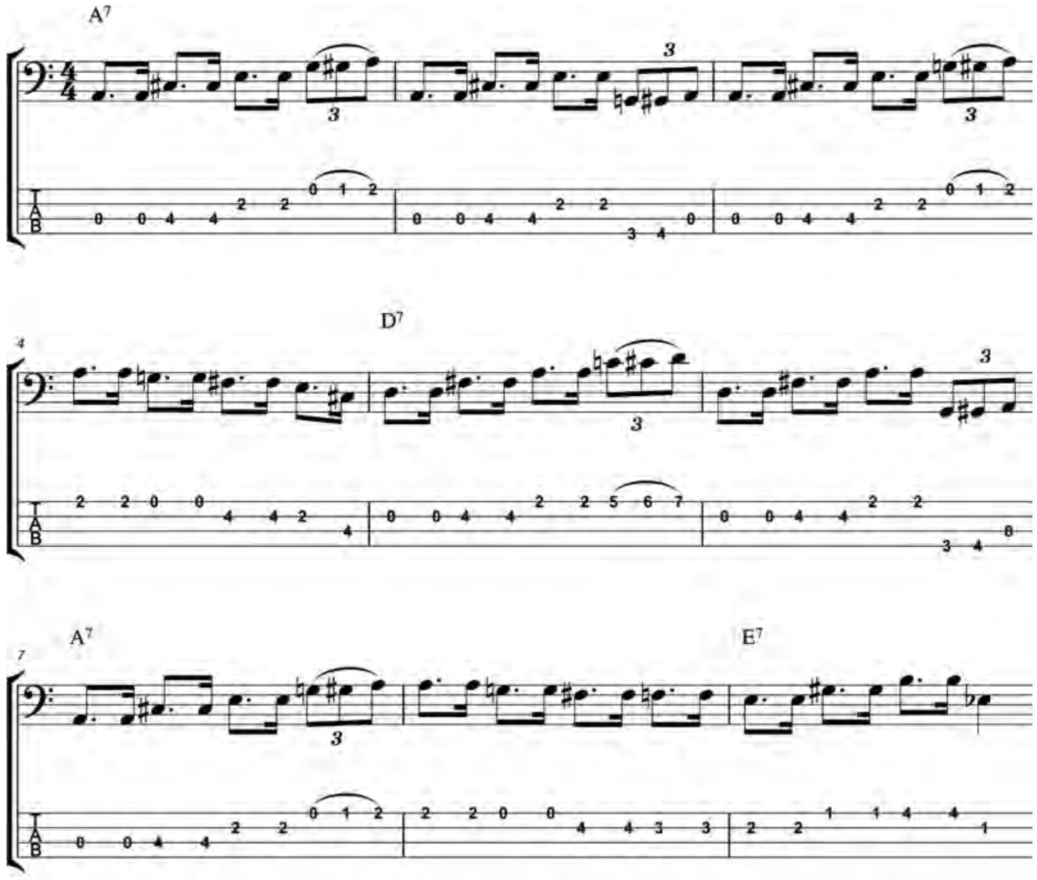
Play the high G note as an open string, the G# at the first fret of the G string and the A note at the second fret. Make sure your timing isn't rushed when trying to fit the triplet in. It needs to sound even with good groove, timing and meter.

In bar two we play the exact same figure until the triplet at the end of the bar. This is the same phrase played down the octave using low G at the third fret of the E string, G# at the fourth fret, and open A string. The third bar is the same as the first. On bar four we start a descending line with high A on the second fret of the G string. The line continues with the same rhythmical pattern, using a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note.

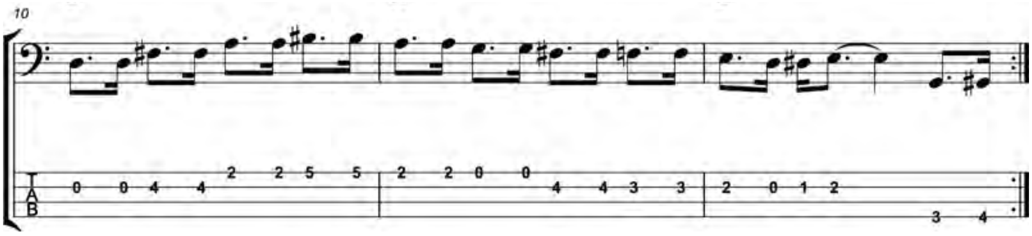
Next up is an open G string, followed by F# at the fourth fret of the D string, and then an interval skip using a dotted E eighth note at the second fret of the D string and then we finish the bar with a C# played at the fourth fret of the A string. This whole sequence is played over an A dominant 7th chord.

Bars five and six are played over a D dominant 7th chord. We use the same rhythmical pattern as before, changing the notes to fit the chord arpeggio. We then have two bars of A dominant 7th. Bar eight is a chromatic descending line that takes us to the next chord change at bar nine. This is an E dominant 7th chord. It also includes my favourite note of the whole 12 bars, which is an Eb crochet. This is a chromatic passing tone that leads back to the D dominant 7th chord in bar 10.

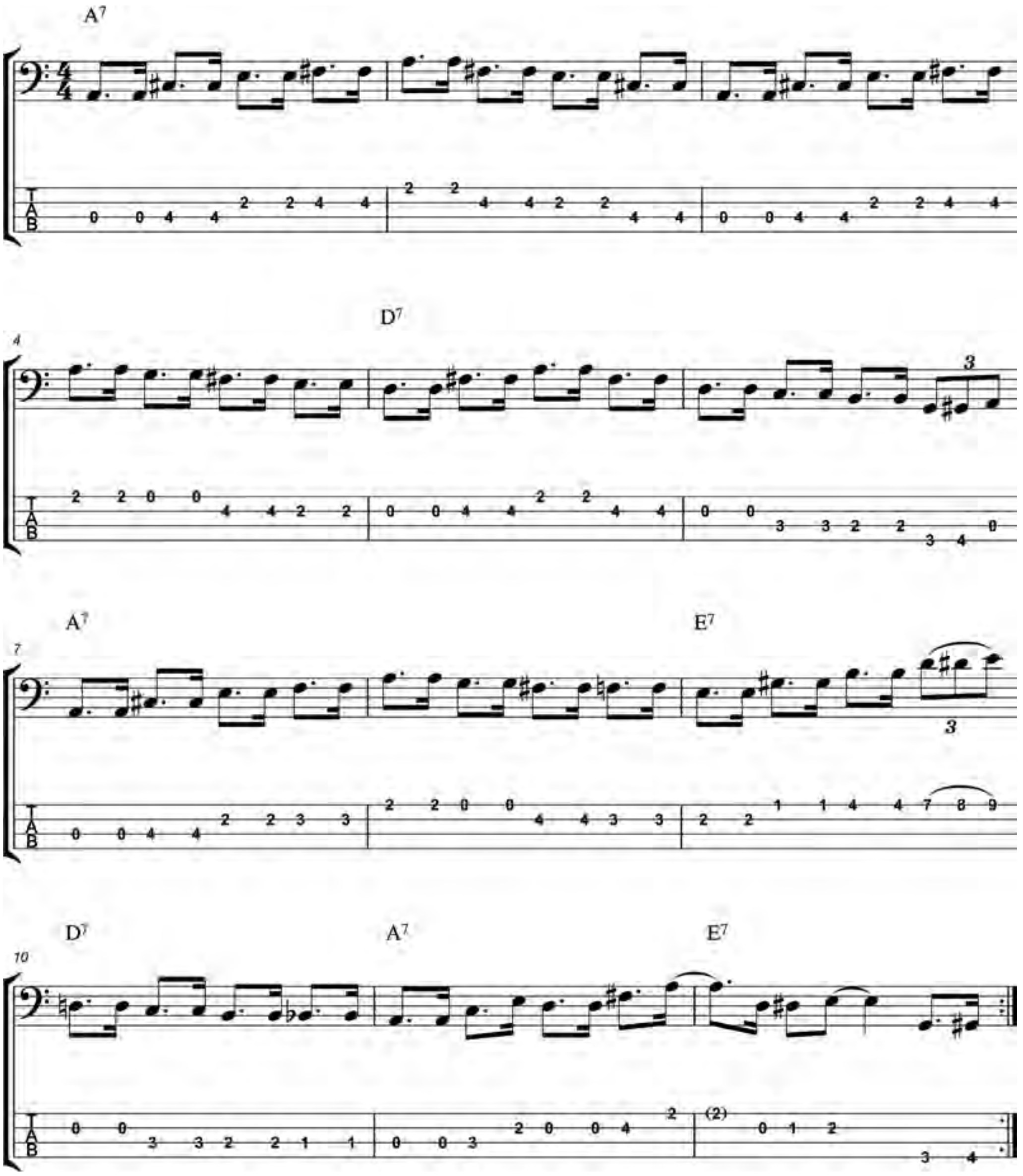
Bar 11 is played over another A dominant 7th chord, with the same notes as bar eight. Finally we have the E dominant 7th chord in bar 12, which has a really nice turnaround figure using a dotted eighth note on E to a D sixteenth note. We then play a D# sixteenth note followed by a tied dotted eighth note to a crochet on E. The last figure is a dotted eighth note and a G# sixteenth note, which completes the progression.



EXAMPLE 1 CONTINUED



EXAMPLE 2



Let's continue this 12-bar blues with a new pattern. We pick it up at bar 13. The pattern stays the same until the last figure. Instead of using a triplet as before, we stick with the same rhythm but use the F#, the major 6th interval of the scale played over the A dominant 7th chord. This note is a common passing tone used in blues, and leads nicely to the octave in bar 14 where the line descends using the same notes.

Bar 15 is a repeat of bar 13, and then at bar 16 we descend the line over the A dominant 7th chord using the same dotted eighth, 16th-note rhythm as before. At bar 17 we change chords to the D dominant 7th and then re-introduce the triplet figure at the end of bar 18. This line descends through to an eighth note triplet starting on a low G at the third fret of the E string.

At bar 19 we switch back to an A dominant 7th chord using the same rhythm and structure. Bar 20 descends the line and then at bar 21 we change chords to an E dominant 7th, using the same triplet figure at the end of the bar. The last line at bar 22 starts with a D dominant 7th chord. We descend the arpeggio using the root of D on open string followed by C at the third fret of the A string, B at the second fret and Bb at the first fret. This sets up the turnaround bars 23 and 24. Bar 23 starts with the root of A on the open string and then has an interval skip from C to E. We then play an open D followed by an F# and a tied A on the second fret of the G string. The last bar, 24, is played over an E dominant 7th chord. We play a chromatic ascending line from D through D# to E and then finish off with a low G and G# played on the third and fourth frets of the E string.

Blues is such a crucial style and genre for any bassist. It transcends many other styles of music. Enjoy getting some of this under your fingers.

STUART CLAYTON

Solo like a boss with Commander Clayton

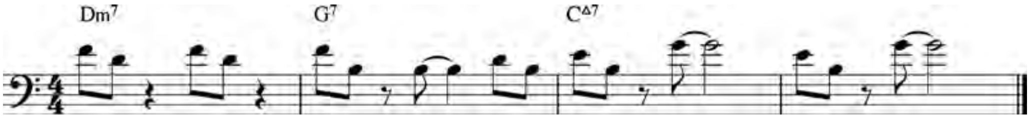
Welcome back to my column on learning to play simple but effective solos. As you'll hopefully know by now, our focus here is to learn to use chord tones in order to support the harmony in as clear a way as possible. Learning to improvise in this way will mean that your lines are strong melodically and will result in good-sounding solos. I should emphasise again that we are taking a very slow and methodical approach to this: we've covered the basic arpeggio types that you'll need in order to play over a simple three-chord blues (dominant 7th chords) and last month we covered the ii-V-I progression (minor 7th, dominant 7th and major 7th chords). So far we have focused our efforts only in the key of C, the logical place to begin learning any theory-based concepts.

THE II-V-I PROGRESSION (CONTINUED)

This month we'll continue playing over the ii-V-I progression. Last month we played very simple lines over these chords using basic rhythms: minims and crotchets only. This is very restricting, but allows your brain the time needed to make choices about which notes to play next. Assuming that you're now comfortable with doing this, we're now going to add more rhythmic complexity into our lines. Any quaver-based rhythms are now acceptable and you should find that this allows you to create much more interesting solo ideas. As ever, before you start it's a good idea to learn some sample lines to get a feel for what is required of you. The following examples should be learned slowly and carefully: as you play them, remember to think about the notes in each chord. I've included some brief notes about some of the thought processes behind these examples. This should help you find similar ideas. Once you are comfortable with these examples, you should begin experimenting with lines of your own.

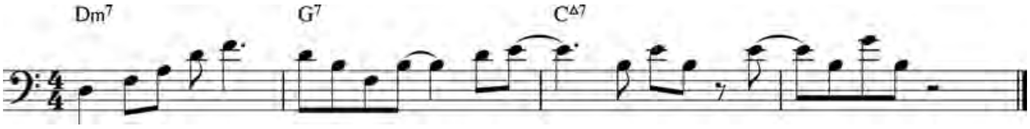
EXAMPLE 1

Don't be afraid to be simple in your melodic ideas. This example uses basic repeating phrases. Note the use of a common chord tone in the first two bars: F is the 3rd in the Dm7 chord and the 7th in the G7 chord, so it sounds good when used over both chords.



EXAMPLE 2

This is another simple idea, this time starting with a simple D minor arpeggio.



EXAMPLE 3

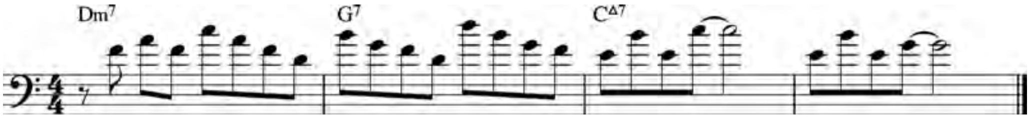
This example uses repeated, descending phrases in the first two bars. Again, note the use of common chord tones in the Dm7 and G7 bars.

EXAMPLE 4

This example features the use of space in the second two bars, which is very effective after two busy bars. Don't feel you need to fill every single beat with notes – let your ideas breathe.

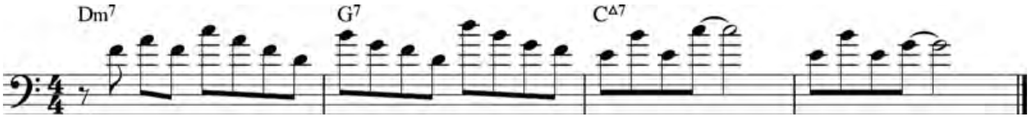
EXAMPLE 5

This example uses some descending ideas in the first two bars and a simpler phrase in the second two.



EXAMPLE 6

This example has some nice rhythmic ideas that you should experiment with: starting a phrase on the offbeat (bar one) and arriving at the next chord a quaver early (bar two leading into three).



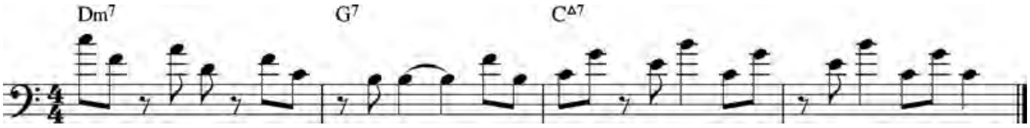
"ANY QUAVER-BASED RHYTHMS ARE NOW ACCEPTABLE AND YOU SHOULD FIND THAT THIS ALLOWS YOU TO CREATE MUCH MORE INTERESTING SOLO IDEAS. AS EVER, BEFORE YOU START IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO LEARN SOME SAMPLE LINES TO GET A FEEL FOR WHAT IS REQUIRED OF YOU"

EXAMPLE 7

Another simple idea using some wider intervals in the first two bars.

EXAMPLE 8

This example uses a nice descending 5ths idea in the first bar and some ascending 5ths in the final two bars. Exploring intervals in this way can result in some interesting lines.

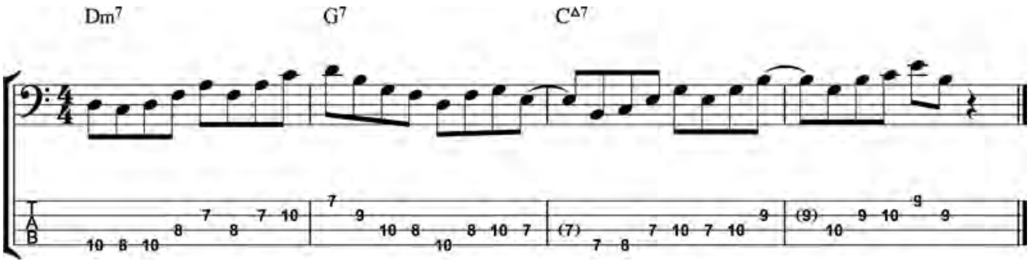


PLAYING WITH RESTRICTIONS

In last month's column I suggested restricting yourself to just two strings in order to force yourself out of pattern or 'box shape' playing that is quite easy to fall into on the bass. This month, we will apply a similar restriction. This time, we experiment with improvising only within one position. Let's use frets seven to 10 only. Your first finger should be on the seventh fret and using the finger-per-fret technique you'll be able to cover the other frets needed. Below are two sample lines using this technique. I have included TAB in these examples, purely for illustrative purposes. I recommend that you study these lines, then experiment with the technique on your own.

EXAMPLE 9

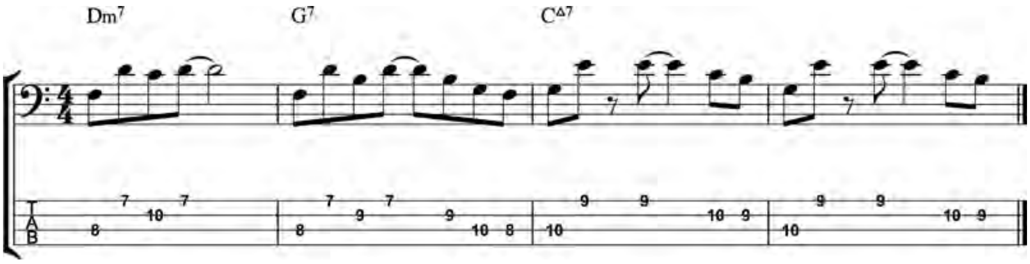
This is a busy line, but illustrates the concept of position playing quite well.



EXAMPLE 10

This is a more melodic example, with more space. Wider intervals are used again.

That's all for this month. Next month we'll be taking things up a level by looking at the jazz blues progression. We'll also be expanding into another key so there'll be some new arpeggios for you to cover. Until then...



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ROB STATHAM

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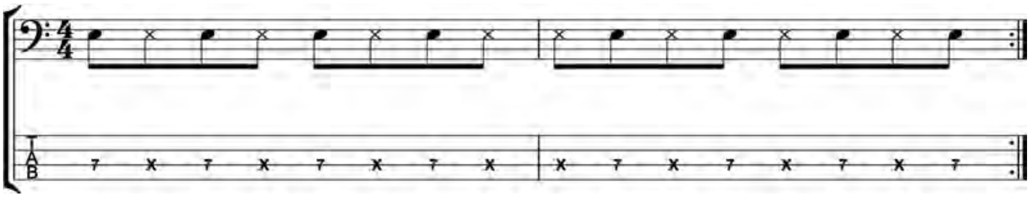
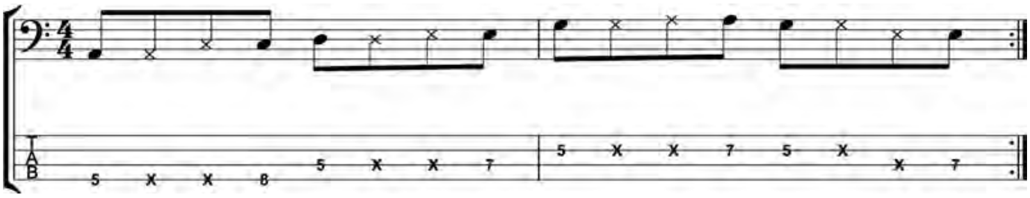
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



Dead notes are notes that we play while muting the string with our fretting hand but not holding down a note, thus producing a percussive note of indeterminate pitch. This is a very effective colour and can add a really funky effect to our bass-lines. You can hear it in the playing of the great James Jamerson, and very much so in the playing of Jaco Pastorius. It tends to be a technique associated with funk playing, but it can enhance a bass-line in any style and is definitely worth spending time with.

I have found that players either don't use this technique at all, or, where they do use it, it tends to be in a fairly instinctive way. This was initially true for me, but at a certain point I found I needed to develop more control over how I used the technique, so I started to work on ideas and exercises to help me be deliberate about it rather than trusting to luck. While doing this I discovered that the feel of a bass-line can change a great deal depending on where we place the dead notes, so to have more control over this technique enables us to create variation in a line without changing the actual notes much or at all. Rocco Prestia from Tower Of Power uses this a lot and is able to create many variations from a basic idea, depending on where he places the dead notes.

A good place to start might be with eighth notes, placing the dead note either on the downbeat or on the upbeat, as I demonstrate in **example 1**. Here I have notated two bars of eighth notes on an E, in the first bar

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placing the dead note on the upbeat, the 'and' of the beat, and switching this around in the second bar with the dead note on the downbeat. Care needs to be taken when muting the strings for a dead note, so that we don't allow any unwanted harmonics to ring out. It's also worth mentioning that while the dead note is notated at a particular fret, it doesn't really matter too much where we play it as the pitch is irrelevant, so if you find it easier to play at another fret then that's fine. When the example as notated is comfortable, try some variations, for instance changing the dead note from the downbeat to the upbeat every beat or every two beats. There are many possibilities, and the more exhaustive we are in trying different variations the better.

Example 2 suggests a variation, applying the idea to a minor pentatonic bass-line as well as just one note. Here I am changing every beat, the first beat with the dead note on the upbeat, the second beat with the dead note on the downbeat and continuing with this alternation. Once you have this idea down, try it the other way, playing the fretted notes as dead notes and the dead notes as fretted tones, and you'll begin to get a sense of how much the feel and emphasis of a bass-line can be varied using this technique. As you can appreciate, there are many possible variations, so again, try to be thorough and exhaustive in approaching this. For instance, you could take this idea and change every two beats and then try that starting either way. The more variations you practise, then the more control you will develop using this technique.

In **example 3** I move to an octave pattern using a sixteenth note subdivision. Here I move the dead note along one sixteenth every two beats, thus over two bars, placing it on each subdivision in turn. Explore this basic idea and try some variations. One way you might vary it is to experiment with using two dead notes rather than just one: play each beat as two dead notes and two fretted tones, and then move the two dead notes along by one subdivision, so each beat consists of a fretted tone, two dead notes, and a fretted tone.

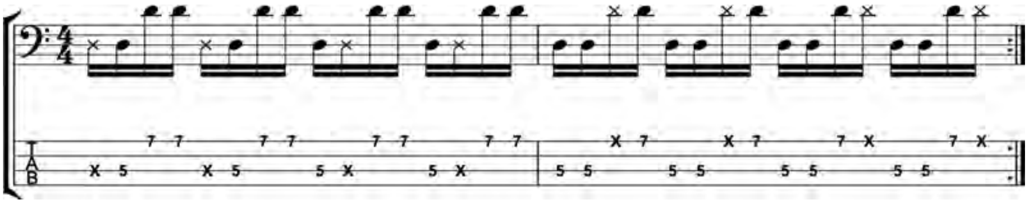
Example 4 puts some of this into the context of a two-bar bass-line repeated with variations. Here there is one slight change to the rhythm, as the first beat of each two bars is slightly different. In bar one it is an eighth note followed by two sixteenths played as dead notes, and in bar three it is two sixteenths played as dead notes followed by an eighth note.

Other than that the only changes are in the dead notes. The second half of the first bar of the two-bar pattern is reversed the second time it is played, starting with a fretted tone and alternating, whereas the first time it starts with a dead note then alternates.

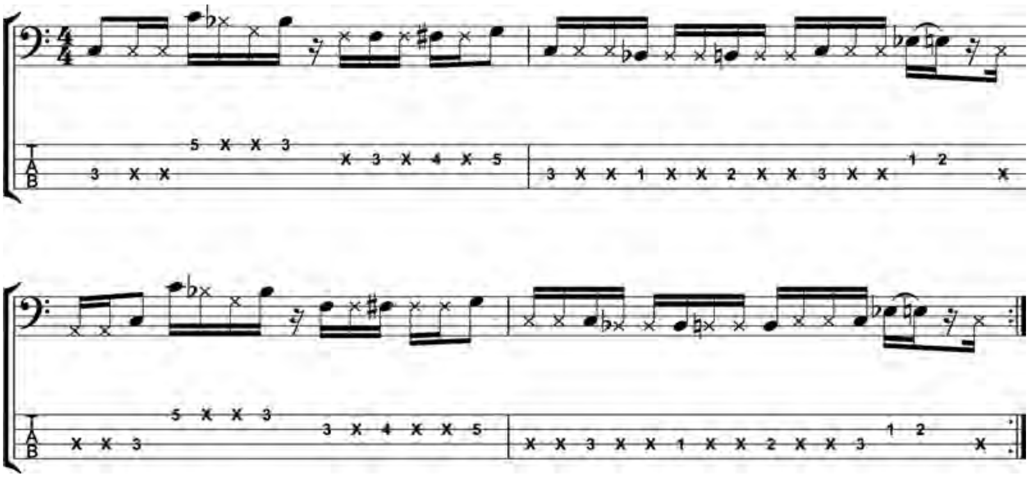
The second bar of the pattern is a 'groups of three' idea – the first time a fretted tone followed by two dead notes, the second time two dead notes followed by a fretted tone. As you'll hear, the feel and emphasis of the bass-line changes quite noticeably, despite the notes being virtually the same each time. Once again, there are many other possibilities, so try and spin some of your own variations on this idea, placing the dead notes on other subdivisions and noting how this changes the feel and emphasis of the bass-line.

It is well worth taking an exhaustive approach to exploring this technique, as the more variations you practise, the more control you will develop and the greater will be your vocabulary of ideas. This can provide the basis for many ways to change a bass-line idea to great musical effect.

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



> "HERE I AM CHANGING EVERY BEAT, THE FIRST BEAT WITH THE DEAD NOTE ON THE UPBEAT, THE SECOND BEAT WITH THE DEAD NOTE ON THE DOWNBEAT AND CONTINUING WITH THIS ALTERNATION"

FRANC O'SHEA

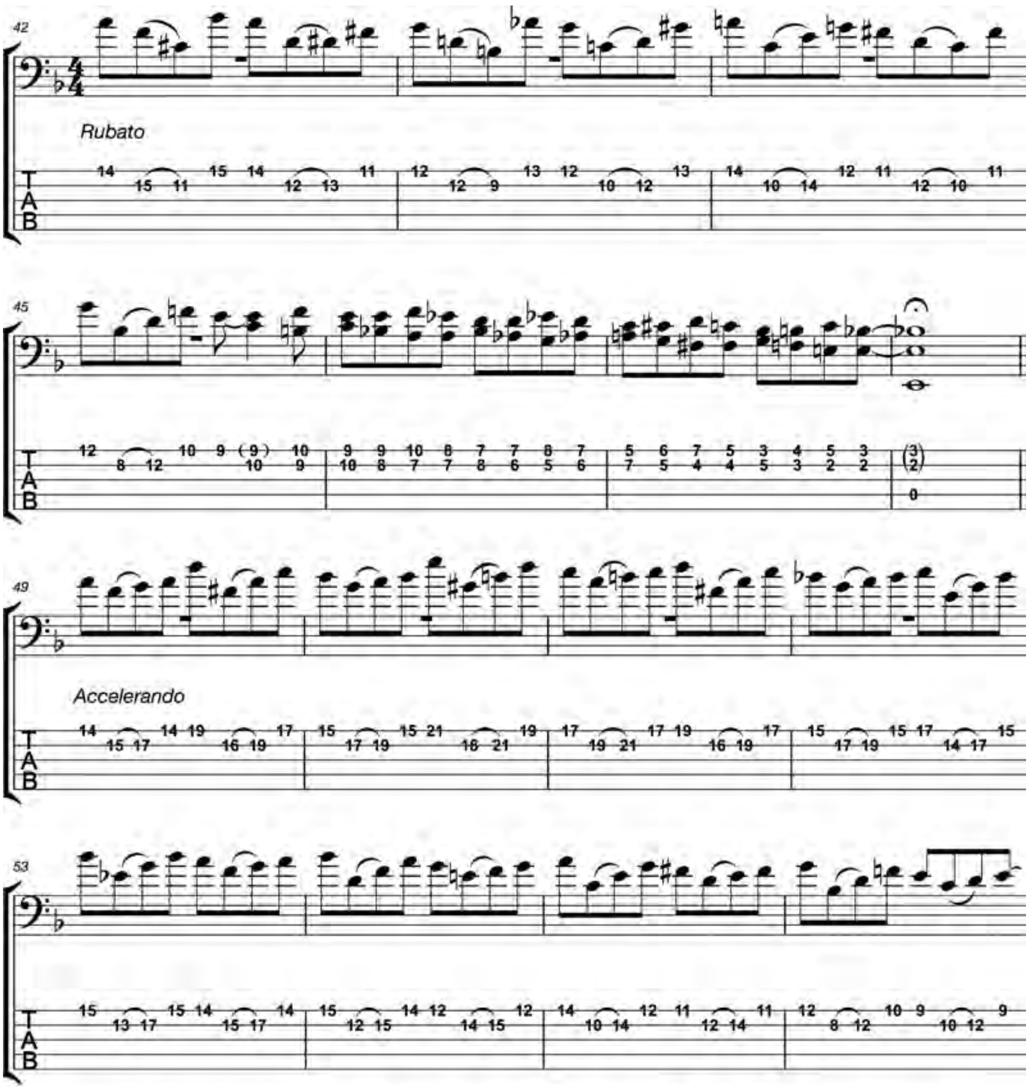
The ultimate bass piece, explored by the mighty Franc

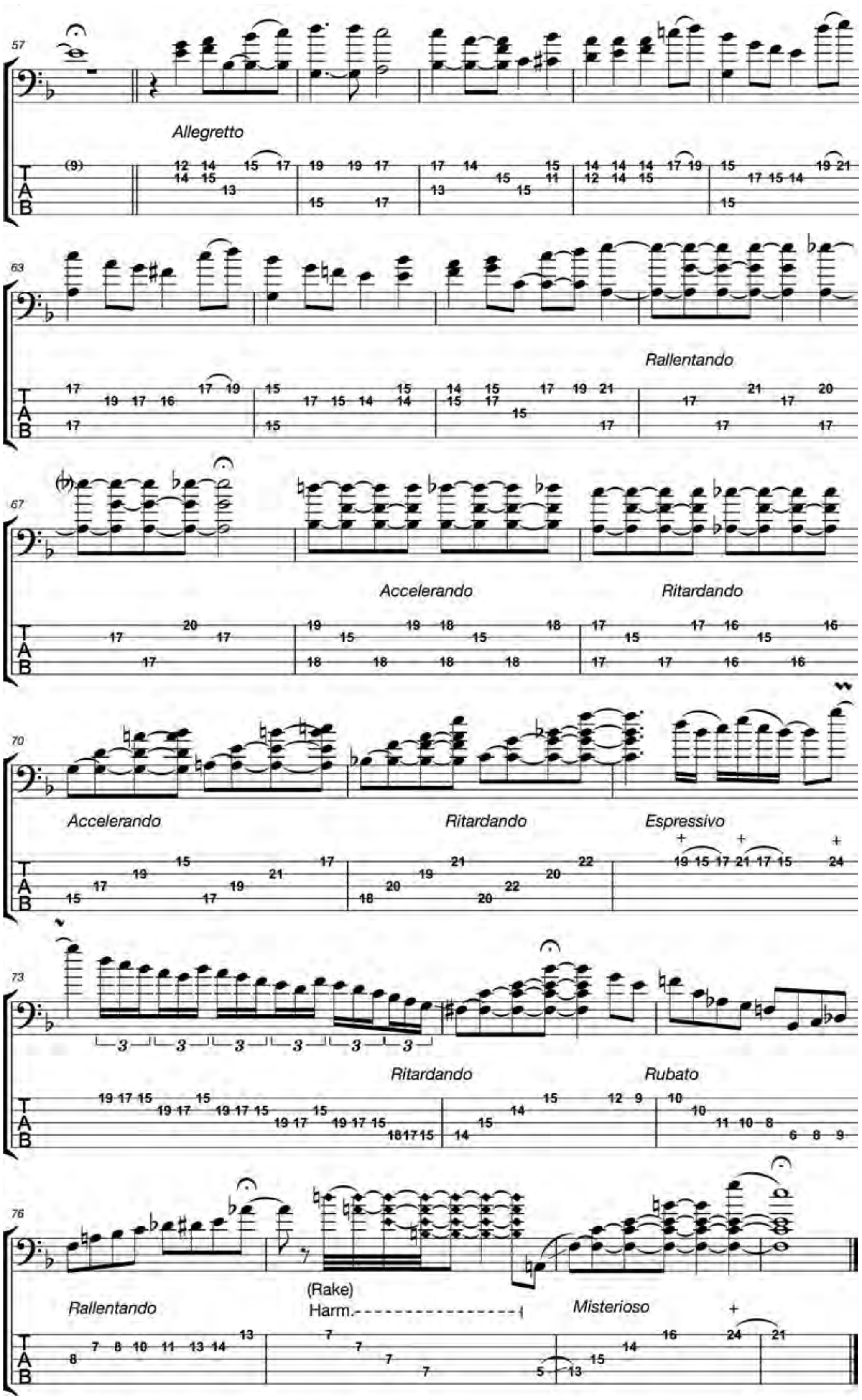
In this month's column, I will be continuing to put together all the ideas I have looked at over the past few issues into one coherent piece, and exploring how the use of dynamics and other indications can bring a work like this to life. The first half of the piece appeared in my column last month and the second half is shown here. The composition, 'Pearl', originally appeared on my first solo album *Esprit*, released in 1999, as well as on compilation albums that featured many prominent bassists.

When attempting a piece like 'Pearl', all the elements of dynamics, timing and expression come together to create the performance. Notation can only hint at these aspects, as written music cannot fully demonstrate what can ultimately only be experienced. However, we can indicate some of the expression involved in compositions like this by employing standard classical Italian terms. For a comprehensive list with further links to more in-depth definitions, search Wikipedia under the title 'List of Italian musical terms used in English'.

In last month's column, 'Pearl' was notated up to approximately the halfway point, terminating at bar 41. The second half shown

EXAMPLE 1





here commences from bar 42. The rubato marking indicates that the piece is played freely over the next few bars. By listening to the audio in the digital edition of *BGM*, you'll get an idea of how I meant this to be performed. There's a subtle pulling and stretching of the time, creating an expressive, almost romantic, heartfelt mood here, terminating with the indication to pause as designated by the fermata in bar 48. Covering bars 49 through to 57 there is an accelerando marking indicating that the music accelerates incrementally, becoming more fervent as each phrase is traversed.

Bars 58 to 65 are marked as being played allegretto. Here the piece breaks away from the overall predominant rubato feel and a definite feeling of time is introduced. The allegretto marking indicates a joyful up-tempo feeling, but not as fast as if an allegro marking was used. This joyful mood is broken in bar 66 where a rallentando is shown, indicating that the music becomes progressively slower.

Leading on from the descending voice-led ideas appearing in bars 66 and 67, bars 68 and 69 are an extension of this idea, though a gradual speeding up and then slowing down feel is indicated by the accelerando and ritardando markings. The same effects appear in bars 70 and 71. The 'cherry on the cake' that terminates this ascension is the espressivo tapped line in bar 72. This is followed in bar 73 by a fast overall descending run which slows down (ritardando) at the very end to land on a Gb7b5 in bar 74, which adds to the dramatic effect.

After the Gb7b5 is held, indicated by the fermata sign, there is an anacrusis (lead in) on beat four to the next phrase which starts rubato, but slows to its end in bar 76 before being followed by a raked harmonics chord in the following bar. The final two bars are played misterioso – reinforced by the final ambiguous maj9#11 chord, evoking an enigmatic feeling as the last notes fade.

Next month we'll look at how harmonics can be used to create entire solo bass pieces. Until then...

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PHIL MANN

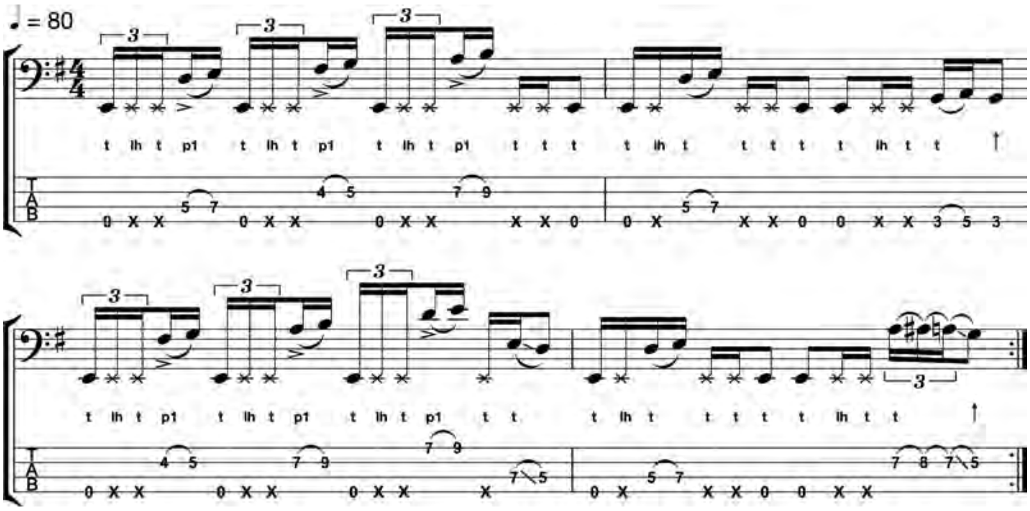
Getting academic in slapping with Professor Mann

When academics refer to music as a language, it's well justified. In the same way you apply the rules of punctuation, grammar and sentence structure to literature, you will find that chords, scales, bar lines, key signatures, and time signatures are the consistent properties that appear in music.

As there are only 12 notes on our instrument, it's common to identify similar melodic patterns in a whole host of musical genres. Even in different musical pedigrees, certain melodic characteristics are consistent. Let's take a simple root and 5th movement as an example: this interval relationship can be identified in an abundance of places, ranging from pop music to reggae, funk, jazz and folk. So what is it that differentiates musical styles? Well, more commonly than not, it's actually rhythm – after all, it's not the notes you play, but how and when you play them.

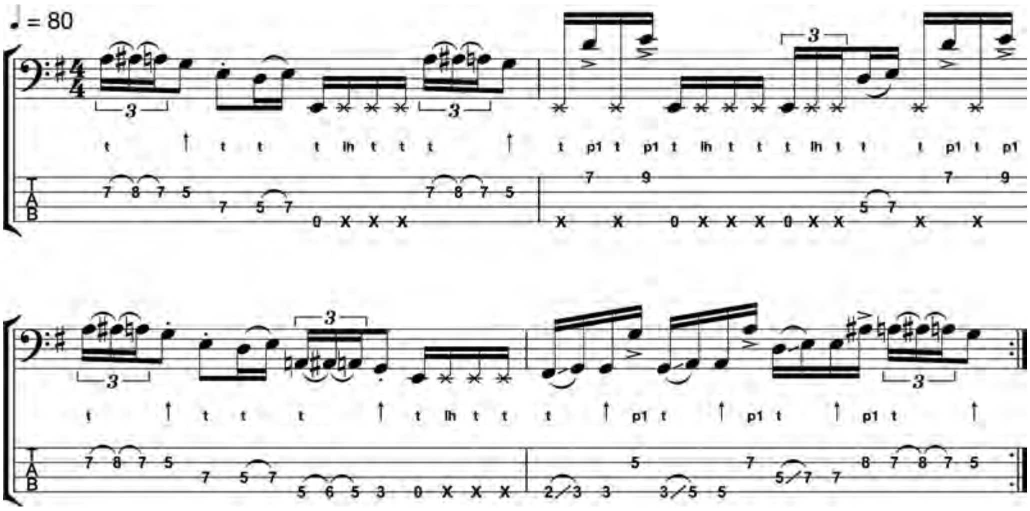
This month, we'll continue to expand our rhythmic vocabulary in the slap bass idiom. Our first example introduces two key rhythmic components that you'll continue to encounter throughout all of the remaining exercises.

EXAMPLE 1



Predominantly focusing on one particularly tricky phrase that consists of a semiquaver triplet followed by two sixteenth notes, **example 1** also features a melodic phrase that is based around a minor pentatonic blues scale. Pay particular attention to the first beat of bar one and the last beat of bar four respectively, as these triplet and double thumbing phrases will continue to appear as the lessons progress.

EXAMPLE 2

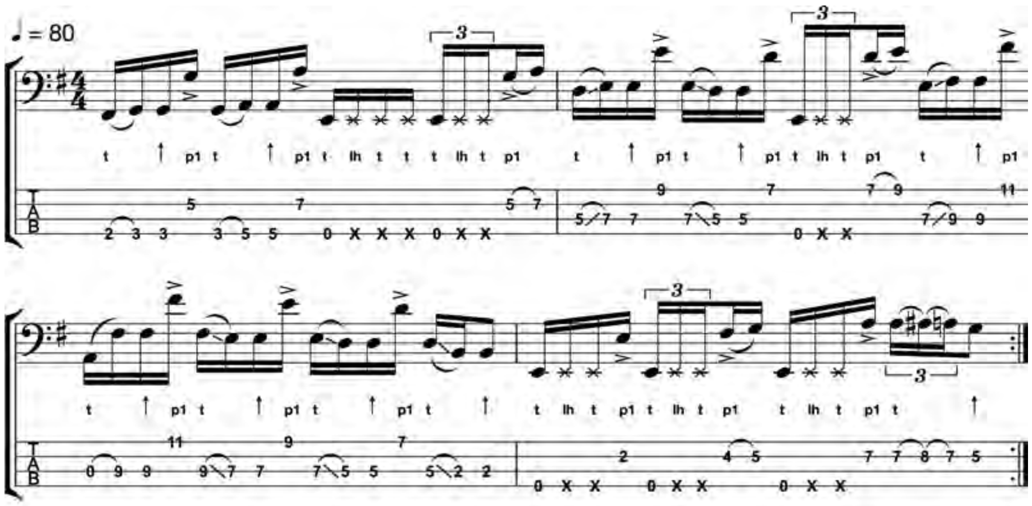


This example features a number of components that may feel somewhat familiar to you, jazz-funk fans. One such technique features in each of the first three bars, on beats three, two and four respectively. Using a combination of left and right hands, a steady stream of semiquavers can be produced by striking the string with your thumb and then using your left hand to produce a percussive slap. Once executed, leave your hand at rest on the strings so that your right hand can then produce two subsequent dead notes.

> "EVEN IN DIFFERENT MUSICAL PEDIGREES, CERTAIN MELODIC CHARACTERISTICS ARE CONSISTENT"

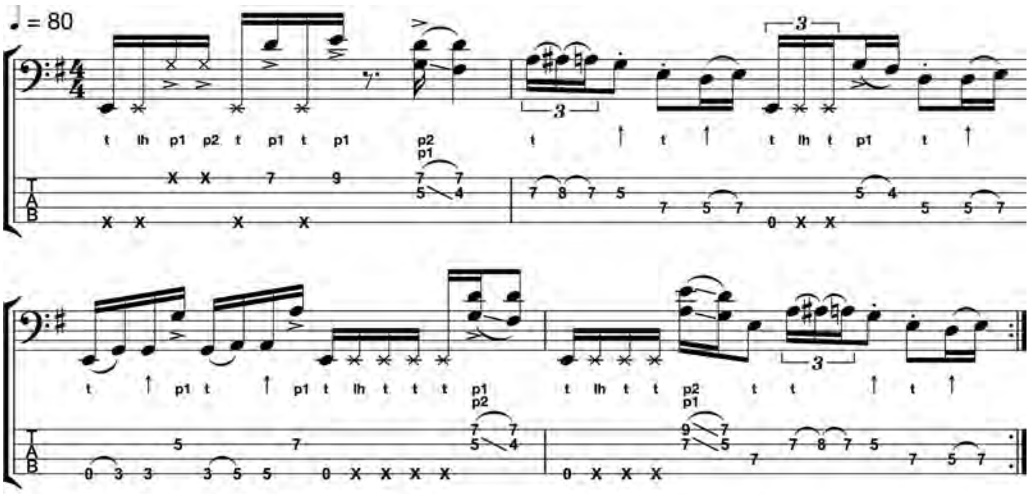
EXAMPLE 3

This develops the double thumbing octave patterns that we encountered in **example 2**, although they now appear in both ascending and descending forms. If you have access to a chorus or flanger pedal, this example could be a perfect platform for their application.



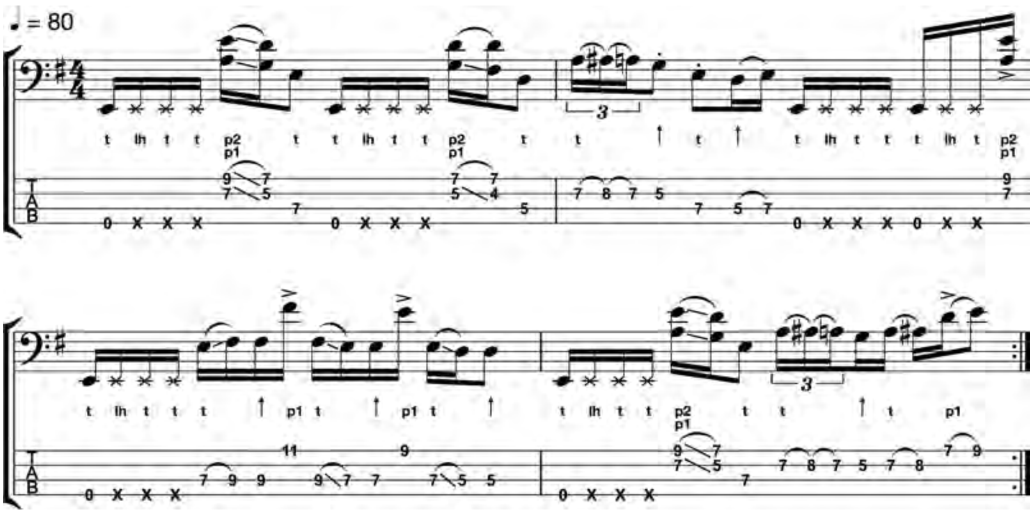
EXAMPLE 4

This combines all of the components you've already encountered but adds another melodic and rhythmic layer with the inclusion of both double popping and stops. Strike the open string of your bass and then use your left hand to create an ensuing dead note by slapping the fretboard in a percussive manner. Once executed, leave the fretting hand at rest on the strings and use the index and middle fingers of your plucking hand to create two subsequent dead note semiquaver pops.



This month I'm celebrating another lovely landmark, by celebrating three years of writing for *BGM*! Thank you so much for all your wonderful messages of support and continued positive feedback, it's been a fabulous experience writing for such a fantastic publication and long may it continue! For now, I'll leave you with **example 5**, and until next time… practise hard!

EXAMPLE 5



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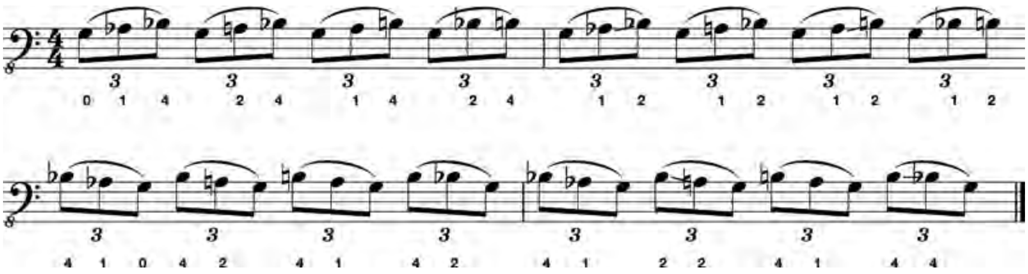
DAVID ETHERIDGE

"If I had a hammer..." says double bass guru David Etheridge

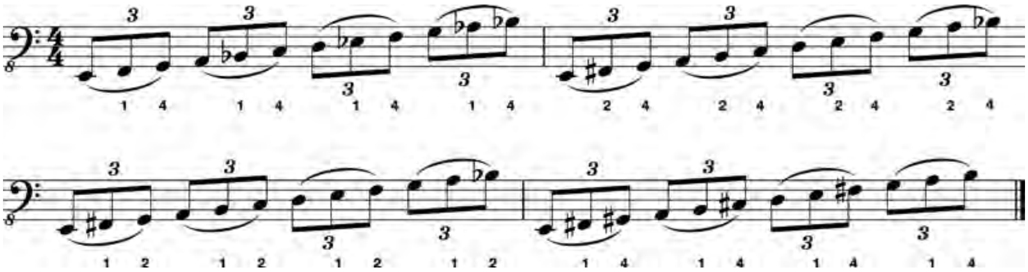
In our last issue we looked at slides, so this month let's investigate hammer-ons and pull-offs. These techniques can add to your musical vocabulary as well as cutting down the amount of effort needed when playing, which is always a good thing. So let's look at the basic techniques before we expand them.

One factor that will help is a good set-up: how low the strings are relative to the fingerboard. It's a bizarre fact that double bass manufacturers – particularly in the budget ranges – still have strings that are way too high in the set-up. In more expensive models and the boutique market you can specify the type of action that you want: of course, if you're spending several thousand pounds on an instrument, this is exactly as it should be. So why the high action on budget models? The conclusion I've come to is that they're set up as they would have been in the bad old days of gut strings, which were low tension, and a high action allowed for projection and forceful playing, particularly when playing with brass and reed sections. These days,

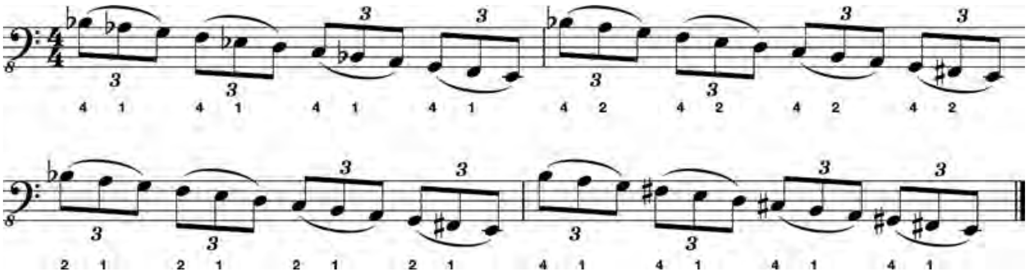
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



with high-tension steel strings, a high action will make playing very difficult, and for the beginner student, almost impossible.

So what's a suitable height? For jazz playing, 4mm on the G string at the bridge end of the fingerboard will make for a very playable action, going across to 8mm on the E string. For classical playing you might need to raise this 1 or 2mm on each string. Personal preference is obviously paramount, and these days, more players are looking at adjustable bridges, with knurled wheels built into the bridge feet so you can adjust the action yourself depending on what type of music you're going to play, and all without having to remove the bridge entirely.

Back to hammer-ons and pull-offs: we can see from the above that the less you have to press down – particularly in higher positions – the easier things will be. Let's start in the half and first positions, and on the G string. **Example 1** shows some basic fingerings where you pluck the open G and hammer on the other notes: 1 and 4 for the Ab and Bb, 2 and 4 for the A and Bb, while in first position you'll get A and B with 1 and 4, and Bb and B natural for the A#/Bb and B natural. If you experiment with the hammer-ons, you may find one interesting thing: it's easier to do a 1, 2 hammer-on rather than a 2, 4, as your first and second fingers are stronger than the fourth.

Notice that the fingering in the first and second bars is slightly different: in the latter we're sliding up from the half position to the first on the first beat, so that we're ready for the hammer-on on the second beat, all in first position. Meanwhile, on the third beat we slide up again to second position ready for a 1, 2 hammer-on on the fourth beat. As you can see, there's always more than one way of doing things.

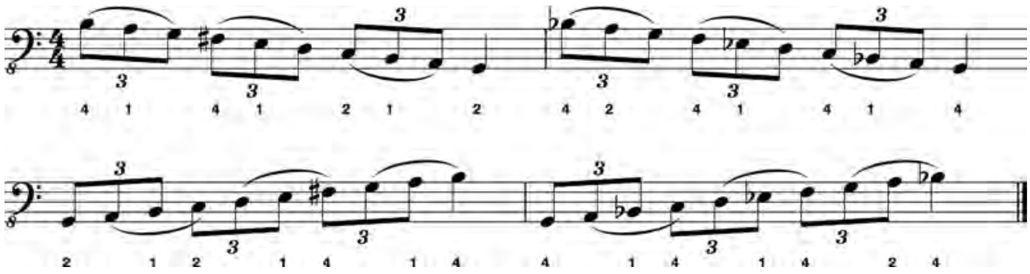
Bars three and four in this example are slightly different. The important thing to remember is that as you're pulling off, you pull your fingers slightly to the left as you release them. This has the effect of a left-hand pluck that provides movement (and therefore sound) to the string. As you pull off your first finger, it'll cause the open string to vibrate. Notice in bar four that we're sliding back on the second and fourth beats, so that the pull-off will effectively be a combination of slides and pull-offs. Subtle, but effective. **Example 2** shows how hammer-ons can work across all the strings going up in half and first positions. Notice that the notes in bars two and three are the same, but the fingerings are different: half position in bar two, first position in bar three.

Example 3 shows the same principle applied to pull-offs across all four strings, again with alternate fingerings in half and first positions. From all this, you can see that you can change positions and fingerings for a variety of scalic riffs in any key that uses open strings. **Example 4** shows major and minor scales both down and up using both techniques. Notice in the scales up that you have to accommodate the change of string into your hammer-ons, and once again you can mix and match major and minor progressions for a variety of scales and modes.

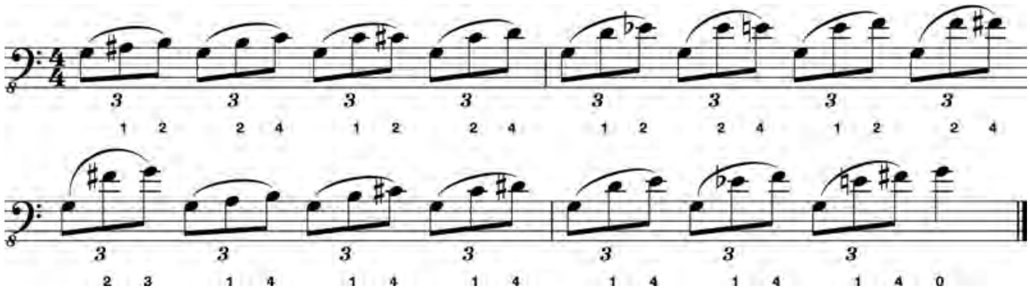
We don't need to limit ourselves to just the lower positions for hammer-ons and pull-offs. Any position on any string combined with the relevant open string will work fine. Some illustrations are given in **example 5.** Here we can go up in semitones or whole tones. Notice that the fingering I've given for the semitone groups pairs of triplets into one position: 1, 2; 2, 4. In fact you can make all the semitones a 1, 2 fingering, as that can be slightly easier for you when moving up. Both approaches work fine. For the whole tones we'll use a 1, 4 fingering throughout.

Once you've tried this, try the same on each string, and you'll find that you can add hammers and pulls in any combination across the fingerboard. This means you can create fills that are somewhat easier to play using these techniques. After all, Victor Wooten uses them all the time, although I would think that the double thumb on double bass might not be possible! Of course, with extended fingering things get a lot more expansive, and you can extend that to thumb position in the upper octaves of the range. As I said earlier, a low action is essential for this kind of work without struggle and finger pain. Next time around, we'll look at more possibilities...

EXAMPLE 4



EXAMPLE 5



> "ANY POSITION ON ANY STRING COMBINED WITH THE RELEVANT OPEN STRING WILL WORK FINE"

STEVE LAWSON

Do you know your GUI from your USB? asks FX guru Lawson

This month we're going to get gooey – ah, sorry, 'GUI' – which stands for 'graphical user interface' (in other words, everything that happens on screen). Back in the 80s when computers and music first began their love affair, the interface was often just three or four LED numbers and a couple of lights. Someone rather witty once described programming an early synth (probably a DX7) as being "like trying to wallpaper your hallway through the letter box." While the power of the devices was often significant by the standards of the day, the interfaces made them an absolute bugger to programme.

This was certainly the case with early multi-FX units, cursed as they were with the ubiquitous three- or four-digit LED display, and often rows and rows of edit layers with or without corresponding lights to tell you where you were. I spent hours trying to get to grips with the various pedals that I had, squeezing as much use out of them as I could and digging as deep into the programmability as possible.

Through the 90s, those LED number things were gradually replaced by two, three or four line LCD displays, that had – shock! – words and everything on them. All of a sudden, you could see what the patch was that you were working on: it would tell you what the effect was that was currently being edited, and which parameter was being altered. But as is the way, complexity soon outstripped the meagre limitations of the interface, and once again, it felt like cave-diving with no torch, a leap in the dark to try and find just where that patch was. And then remember it? Forget it.

This was pretty much the situation I lived with for almost 20 years, although my trusty Lexicon MPX G2 is one of the most versatile rackmount guitar processors ever. In the close to 20 years since it was released, it's barely been surpassed, but it was built long before the idea of hooking up rackmount gear to computer monitors became the norm. Very few people had the time or inclination to dig deep enough and find out what it was really capable of.

I spent the best part of two decades doing that, until about a month ago, when the lure of a decent GUI became too much, and I switched to a new unit called the MOD Duo, made by MOD Devices in Berlin. The inauspicious two-button, two-knob box comes to life when you connect it via USB to a computer. Open up a browser window, and every patch is rendered as a pedalboard that you can tweak and edit like a real board, building the most insanely complex routing for all the sounds inside.

The onscreen pedal designs themselves are an example of skeuomorphism, the depiction of ornamental design features that were necessary in the original. There's no need for them to look like pedals and have animated foot switches, but there's something reassuringly familiar about tweaking a virtual pedalboard, and the sounds that become possible are mind-blowing. Check them out online at **www.moddevices.com** and have a look around your digital music world for more examples of skeuomorphism. It's everywhere!

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BAXTER ON BASS

Bass dealer extraordinaire Andy Baxter tells us about two splendid Gibsons

Back in 1973 Gibson introduced not one but two new and distinctive basses to the market, the Ripper and the Grabber. Both basses may have been modest options in terms of looks, available in limited colour options with no decorative inlays and controls and pickups mounted on the scratchplate, but the Grabber and Ripper would quickly become two of Gibson's most iconic basses.

Both basses introduced an all-new body shape made from maple. Their contoured edge bodies vaguely echoed the SG, while their offset horns were clearly reminiscent of other popular makes of that era. The Grabber switched to alder in 1975 and likewise, the majority of Ripper basses manufactured in 1975 also had lighter alder bodies. The Ripper then switched back to maple in '77.

The Grabber featured a bolt-on neck with a metal back plate and four screws, comparable with Fender basses, whereas the Ripper featured a set-neck, through-body construction. The Grabber had a V-shaped headstock like the Gibson Flying V, while the Ripper featured the more traditional Les Paul-style headstock. The Ripper was first available in three colour options: natural with a maple fingerboard and black and tobacco sunburst with ebony boards. The Grabber was available in wine red, ebony, natural, walnut and white finishes, all with maple fingerboards.

Focusing on the electrics, Andy Baxter says: "Bill Lawrence designed the pickups for both basses. The Grabber had a distinctive adjustable pickup, which provided plenty of tonal variation. Later, the Gibson Grabber G3 was introduced, which featured three non-adjustable single coil pickups mounted in the neck, bridge and middle positions. Its three-way switch meant that the pickups could be activated as neck and middle, bridge and middle, or all three at once. The Ripper came equipped with two humbucker pickups, known as 'Super Humbuckers', a four-way pickup selector control and a passive midrange control, making it an extremely versatile bass with an tremendous amount of clarity, which wasn't generally something Gibson basses were known for."

The Grabber predominantly achieved its fame after Gene Simmons from Kiss became a player. Other notable players included Mike Dirnt from Green Day in the *Dookie* days. More recently, Jeremy Davies (ex-Paramore) can be seen using a candy red G3. The Ripper was used by Krist Novoselic of Nirvana, who also used a Gibson RD Artist and a Thunderbird bass. Andy Baxter stocks a number of Grabber and Ripper basses, among other vintage Gibson basses. Pictured is a 1974 Ripper and a 1982 Grabber G3 – both black with ebony fingerboards. Both basses have now been sold, but check out Andy's website for new Grabber and Ripper arrivals.

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